

THE YOUNG TRAVELER IN
THE WEST INDIES

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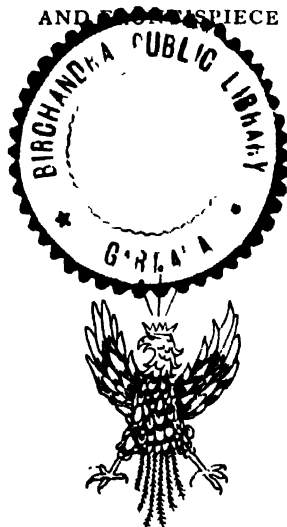
IN PREPARATION

Greece
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THE YOUNG TRAVELLER IN
THE WEST INDIES

LUCILLE IREMONGER

WITH A MAP, 25 PHOTOGRAPHS
AND FORTY-PIECE



PHOENIX HOUSE LTD
LONDON

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

It's a Bigger Life

Creole

The Cannibals, a Romance

The Young Traveller in the South Seas

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CHAPTER I

WELCOME TO JAMAICA

'How funny you look in Jamaica!'

'Well, you looked pretty peculiar in England last year, I can tell you!'

This uncharitable exchange marked the happy reunion of two pairs of devoted cousins, the Fulfords and the Bannisters. They were hugging each other joyously even as they hurled their insults.

'I'll never forget that homburg hat you turned up in!' David Fulford teased John Bannister. David was 15, fair-haired and blue-eyed, an athletic boy, very likable, if a little quiet. His cheeks were flushed in the heat, although he was lightly dressed in an open-necked shirt and shorts.

'It wasn't a homburg, it was a trilby!' John returned vigorously. 'Anyway, look at your shorts, man! They're not shorts at all, they're longs!'

John and David had been born within a few days of each other, and thought of themselves as twins; though John, dark, stocky and exuberant, was very different from David in many ways.

Jane Fulford and Mary Bannister were much of an age, too. Mary had actually had her fourteenth birthday, but Jane was thirteen-and-a-half.

Jane was a tallish, rangy girl, frank-faced and warm-hearted. She was interested in everyone and everything—except her appearance—and her only grouse was that she hadn't been born a boy. Jane had straight brown hair cut in a fringe, the slippery sort of hair that no clip or ribbon will stay on. Mary, her cousin, seemed much more than six months her senior. She was rather grown-up in her manner and her dress, and wore some make-up. At first Jane had been rather put off by this, but she had learned that

Mary was pure gold, and openly affectionate to those she loved.

The Fulfords had just arrived in Jamaica.

But there seemed to be one more Fulford than the Bannisters had bargained for!

'I owe you an explanation, Ted old boy, for being here at all!' Anthony Fulford, Jane and David's father, (always known as Puffer to everyone because he went about everything like a steam engine) was saying as he breezily greeted his brother-in-law. 'The fact is, I didn't know for certain myself I was coming till the very last minute!'

'It's a grand surprise, don't apologize!' Ted Bannister pumped Puffer's hand up and down. 'But how come?'

Ted Bannister was tall and rather sallow from frequent attacks of malaria, with a bald head and a beaky nose. Languid and slow-speaking, he towered over the short, stalwart, red-faced Puffer, who was always talking and always on the go, presenting a complete contrast to him. Ted looked what he was, a thoughtful, quiet family solicitor.

'Well, I was grouching at the office, you see, telling the News-Editor and the other boys I was browned-off at being left without my family—just a joke, in order to cash in on a bit of sympathy!—when in walked the Editor-in-Chief himself! "What, Helen going to the West Indies!" he exploded, "and you mean to say you've got connections out there, Puffer, and never said a word about it? Join them immediately, tour the lot, and send back regular despatches from each island! The West Indies have been in the news a lot, it's time we had the facts straight from the horse's mouth!"'

'When was this?' Grace Bannister, Ted's wife, asked, smiling at Puffer's dramatic presentation.

'Two days before Helen left!' Puffer said. 'You can imagine the rush! Packing—passports—and trying to get a passage on the same plane! But we did it! Fleet Street always

does! So meet Yours Truly, Our Very Special Correspondent for the West Indies!

He made a sweeping bow, scattering parcels everywhere, then bent to pick them up.

'I'll be able to help you a bit with introductions here and there, and a tip or two, I expect', Ted Bannister said.

'I'm counting on that!' Puffer said, still picking up parcels. 'I'm counting on it! All I know about the West Indies is Helen's family gossip, and Helen has neither history, geography nor, in fact, any education to her credit!'

'Rubbish', Ted said. 'Helen knows a lot. You never listen, that's your trouble, Puffer!'

'Come on, you young rascallions!' Puffer shouted to the children. 'Come on! Let's get on! Where's the transport, Ted? I've only got a week in Jamaica, and I've got to get cracking!'

'You've got a lot to learn about the West Indies if you think you're going to rush anything or anyone here!' Ted laughed quietly. 'But come along anyway, my boy, you need a rest and a good meal!'

Ted drove his mother-in-law's large Humber, which she had sent to the airport to fetch her family, with Puffer beside him and Jane and Mary in the back; and Grace drove her own small Austin saloon with the boys behind and her sister Helen sitting in the front with her.

Helen Fulford, Jane and David's mother, was the elder sister of Grace Bannister, Mary and John's mother. Grace and Helen had been born and brought up in the island, and Helen had only left it at the age of 18, when she had gone with her father on a trip to England. There she had met Anthony Fulford, and married him. She had not been home to Jamaica since. First the war, and then the children, had kept her in England.

Grace and Ted Bannister, her Jamaican husband, had spent the previous summer in England, however, and they

had at last persuaded Helen to bring her children over to visit her mother and sister in Jamaica.

Mrs Sanguinetti, their mother, had lost her husband recently, and both Grace and Helen felt that it would help her to recover from the shock if she could see her elder daughter once more and meet her 'English grandchildren' for the first time.

Now the great day had arrived.

* * *

The Bannisters' bungalow, where they lived with Mrs Sanguinetti, was in the suburb of St Andrew, near Kingston, Jamaica's capital.

It was painted bright yellow, a box-like little house set in a pretty garden. There was a large square of lawn at the front surrounded by flower beds, and another at the back. Yellow allamanda blossoms adorned the veranda, and there was an arch of magenta bougainvillea over the front gate. The children had no time to notice more than that, and that there was a black boy (with a cap on back to front) doing something to the hose and rotating spray, which kept the grass fresh and the air moist, before the two cars swept through the wide back gate and up the drive into separate garages.

Someone had been holding the back gate open, and that someone was upon them as soon as they were out of the cars. She was kissing and hugging all four children in turn, but Jane and David were getting most of it; and she was a huge, sweet-faced woman with an apron as white as her face was black.

'Oh, Mattie!' John cried, struggling, 'Lemme go! Give us a chance! Meet our old Nana, Jane and David! You know Nana brought up Mummy and Aunt Helen; and us too, and she feels cheated that she didn't bring you up as well, I'll bet!'

Mattie was holding David at arms' length, and admiring him, tears of joy rolling down her face, a grin on her lips.

'What a pretty little boy, though!' she cried ecstatically. 'Look-a him lovely yellow hair, and him blue, blue eyes, dem! And look-a him pretty pink face! I tell you, him pretty for true!'

That was too much for David. He disengaged himself from the plump, loving arms, and stalked away with as much dignity as he could command.

'You'll never live this down, boy!' Puffer crowed with delight. 'Poor David! Pretty David!'

Inside, Mrs Sanguinetti was waiting to welcome them. She was a tall, handsome woman with a beaked nose and a mass of beautiful white hair—a little formidable to strangers, but very affectionate to her family. Her manner was sharp and authoritative from habit, and she held her back very straight, though she seemed rather frail. The children noticed that she used a stick as she led them in to lunch. Before they were properly seated Mattie and the garden-boy and a girl they hadn't seen before were bringing in plates and dishes of food.

'I made Grace order you a real Jamaican meal!' Mrs Sanguinetti said, as they sat down; 'I'm sure Helen's mouth must have watered for our food many a time!'

'Pepperpot soup!' announced Mattie in her deep soft voice, as she set down a vast tureen full of a dark-green liquid before Mrs Bannister. Pink seeds floated on its surface.

'Oh, lovely!' Helen cried. 'I can't tell you how often I've dreamed of good old pepperpot! You can't get it anywhere else in the world besides Jamaica!'

'What did I tell you?' asked Mrs Sanguinetti, triumphantly, looking round her. 'Ah-ha!'

'And what pray *is* pepperpot?' asked Puffer, looking rather distrustfully at his soup plate. 'Apart from being a soup, I mean! It looks like a stagnant pond, with duckweed on the top, though it smells rather better, I must admit!'

'You are awful, Puffer!' Helen said. 'Pepperpot soup is—oh, it's *everything*! You don't make it, or even start it, you

inherit it! It goes on for ever, and gets better as it gets older. You boil it up every day, and just throw in anything you happen to have, pork or salt beef and anything green, especially ochra seeds like we have today—that's those pink things—'

'Oh, *I* see!' Puffer said meaningfully, but he began to eat, and was soon asking for a second helping.

'Next, chicken and Jamaica's coat of arms', Grace announced. 'You haven't come home properly, children, till you've tasted that!'

'I know what the Jamaica coat of arms is', David said. 'It's on the souvenir spoon you sent me last Christmas, Gran! It's an alligator between two Indians, isn't it?' Then he came to a stop, obviously puzzled.

'Is this—alligator?' Jane went on for him.

'No, Indians, undoubtedly!' Puffer put in. 'They save the alligators for the pepperpot soup in Jamaica!'

'It's rice', Ted Bannister said. 'Rice-and-peas, Puffer. Jamaicans eat it every day! Have a look!'

Sure enough, the great platter before Mrs Sanguinetti bore a heap of rice scattered with little red peas. 'But why call rice and peas a coat of arms?' Jane asked.

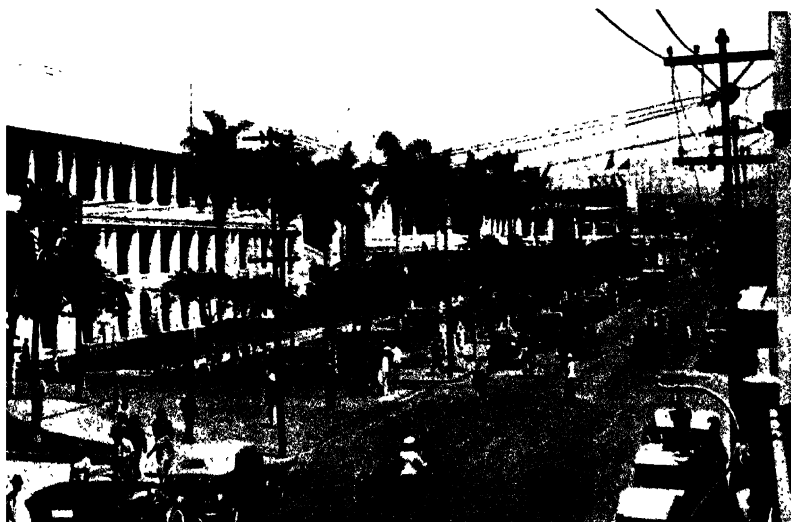
'Oh, it just means something typical of the place', her grandmother said. 'A rather careless way of speaking, as you might say "a theme song".'

David and Jane found the rice-and-peas filling. They could not imagine anyone wanting to eat any of the half-dozen vegetables which Mattie was taking round as well, though they sounded appetizing enough—yams, roasted breadfruit, green chochos (like marrows, Mrs Sanguinetti said), and slices of avocado pear with salt dissolving on their surfaces.

'Would you rather have Irish potato, dear?' Mrs Sanguinetti asked Jane anxiously, seeing her refuse first Indian yam, then yellow yam, then roasted breadfruit. 'You must have some—'



Two aspects of Jamaica. ABOVE. Steep mountains thickly covered with trees and bush and sprinkled with little peasants' houses. BELOW. Modern buildings in Kingston, the capital which was built on the Liguanea Plain.





Some of the women at this Jamaican market are weaving old-fashioned bandanas, others prefer native-made straw hats, and one wears both!

thing substantial after that long journey! I expect you'll take a little time to get used to our vegetables—they're strange to you.'

'Irish potato' turned out to be the ordinary potatoes Jane was used to at home, and when she refused even these Mattie shook her head dolefully over her.

'Now, who's got a good appetite for a real Jamaica pudding?' Grace called out, her spoon raised in the air. Spicy smells came wafting to her guests from the cake-shaped, rich-looking object before her. 'It's sweet potato pone! Come on, Helen!'

The 'pone' was black with raisins and heavy with spices, and with it went a pungent rum sauce.

'The stodge to end all stodges!' Puffer declared irrepressibly, the sweat running down his forehead. 'No wonder Jamaicans sleep in the afternoons!'

But David and Jane shook their heads firmly.

'Poor children', mourned their grandmother. 'You'll have to go into training. I expect you've just forgotten how to eat over in England, what with the war and everything! Half-starved, that's what you are!'

* * *

As soon as lunch was over the children ran out on the front lawn. Friends of Mary's and John's were already pouring through the gate, come to meet and welcome Jane and David.

Jane stood shyly by the muscatel grapevine which grew over a wooden arbour alongside the house. But she could not feel shy for long with these jolly children. They made her and her brother welcome in the same slow, drawly voices she had got used to with Mary and John, and in the same warm way. They all had John's habit, she noticed, too, of addressing you as 'man', no matter what your age, or whether you were a boy or a girl!

'Come on, man!' one of the girls called to her. 'Come on, no need to be shy! Let's play Bull-in-the-Pen, and break the ice!'

So John was thrust into the ring they formed with clasped hands, and made a fine roaring bull. John was determined to break the fence but the children were equally determined to keep him in—sometimes four of them were rolling on the ground before his advance, but they never let go each others' hands.

When at last John 'broke' the pen there wasn't a sign of shyness anywhere.

'Hot work!' a girl called Thelma Demercado cried, as she straightened her dress. It was a very smart dress of candy-striped organdie, fitted at the waist, billowing at the skirt and covered with frills. Jane didn't give much thought to clothes normally, but she couldn't help feeling that her simple blue cotton frock looked limp and shapeless beside the clothes these girls wore. Their hair was very smartly cut too, and most of them wore necklaces, brooches, and bracelets. They *were* grown-up!

But those very children played 'Bull-in-the-Pen', and then 'Passing the slipper', 'Blind Man's Buff', 'Little Sally Walter', and even 'London Bridge is Falling Down' with such a will that they couldn't have been very 'grown-up' inside, any more than Mary was.

Before they noticed how time was passing it was four o'clock, and Mattie was bringing out a tray laden with more food.

'Ice-cream-and-cake!' chanted all the children, 'ice-cream-and-cake! Hurray!'

Mattie handed out glass dishes with soursop ice-cream, with a huge slice of iced fruitcake in each saucer.

'That's an American custom', Mary said to Jane. 'You don't eat ice-cream-and-cake together in England, do you? But we're so close to the States we pick up some of their habits.'

It was a lovely idea, Jane decided, and David voted soursop ice-cream the best thing he had ever tasted.

After ice-cream-and-cake, and jellies and more cake, and iced lemonade and more cake, the visitors ran off home through the front gate. The Bannister and Fulford children went to sit quietly on the steps of the veranda, where their elders were stretched out in deck-chairs and sipping cool drinks in tall glasses chinking with ice.

Puffer was sitting quietly, for him, but he was working hard at the same time, for he was trying to get information about Jamaica from his brother-in-law.

'And there's not a single Arawak Indian you can show me in Jamaica?' he pressed him.

'No, by 1655 when the British took over, the Spaniards had killed them all', Ted replied. He had been telling Puffer about the charming aborigines who had originally inhabited Jamaica, and who had given the island its name, the Arawak *Xaymaca*, meaning Land of Wood and Water.

'They were a gentle, peaceloving people. They lived on maize, and hunted and fished. They didn't need much in life besides their simple huts, their canoes and baskets, and the hammocks they slept in—by the way, the aborigines of the West Indies left us those two words, too, "canoe" and "hammock".'

'Oh, I thought the Navy invented hammocks!' David put in. David thought that to be a Naval officer was the finest thing on earth. He read everything he could find to do with the sea, and his heroes were always men of the sea, whether admirals or 'small-boat sailors'.

'The Arawaks played a sort of football, too, with a wicker-work ball, we know that. I think you'd have approved of them all round, David!' his uncle said. 'And that's about all we know about them. Oh, except one thing. They used to tie boards on the foreheads of their children so as to make them flat!'

'What an odd idea of beauty!' Jane exclaimed. 'Do you think it would improve one, David?'

'There are none here,' Ted said. 'You can see some of their pottery, some bowls, and so on, and a stone image or two, at the Institute of Jamaica. You should squeeze in a visit there, you know. It's got the finest library in the Caribbean!'

'What about the Carib?' Puffer plugged away. 'I had an idea it was Caribs who inhabited these islands. I thought Caribbean came from the word Carib?'

'Yes, they did, and it does. And a nasty lot they were, too, quite different from our gentle Arawaks. (It's our Arawaks you see on the Jamaica coat-of-arms, by the way, David.) The Caribs helped to exterminate the Arawaks, and gave the Spaniards as good as they got, but in the end they were wiped out too. They also left us a less pleasant word than Caribbean, Puffer, also derived from Carib—and that's "cannibal". They *were* cannibals.'

'No wonder the Arawaks were wiped out, then', David said.

'The Caribs were warriors from the cradle—or the hammock, perhaps I should say. They would put bows and arrows into the hands of their youngsters as soon as they could walk, and then they'd hang their food high in a tree and tell them to shoot it down. If they didn't, they used to go hungry!'

'I shouldn't starve!' John boasted, pretending to take aim with a gun.

'No, you wouldn't. John's an excellent shot', his mother explained. 'But poor David might!'

'I'd shoot some ice-cream-and-cake down for David!' John said.

'Don't be silly, Johnsy-boy!' his father said. 'And, for the record, Puffer, there are quite a number of other words we've inherited from those times, "barbecue", "hurricane", "maize", "potato", and "tobacco" among them! And "manatee", too.'

'What's a manatee?' Puffer asked.

'It's a sea-cow', Ted began. Grace cut in, 'Puffer's bound



to meet one somewhere in the West Indies! It's supposed to be the origin of the myth of mermaids, only it's very ugly!

'Just where did the slaves come in?' Puffer pursued his relentless course, ignoring the manatee. 'Whenever the West Indies are mentioned the question of slavery crops up. Most of the people in Jamaica are descended from African slaves, aren't they?'

'The Spanish needed workers. They brought slaves from Africa to cultivate cotton. Then they introduced sugar-cane in the islands, and needed even more workers. When Oliver Cromwell took over Jamaica the slaves were already here.'

While Ted discoursed on Jamaican history the sun was sinking. Suddenly the sky was aflame with glory, scarlet and gold and purple clouds streaked across a brazen sun.

'It's like the Book of Revelation!' Jane breathed.

'I think it was worth coming all the way to the West Indies just to see that!' Puffer agreed. 'But how on earth could anyone describe it?'

Then dusk was on them, like a grey veil enveloping them all, creeping into the corners of the veranda and hiding them from each other.

The boy who had been weeding the lawn appeared round the corner of the house. His cap was gone, and he had changed into a clean shirt and trousers, which gleamed palely in the half-light. He took his place quietly on the lowest step of the veranda, and began to pluck at an instrument he was carrying. Then he began to sing. His voice was rich and deep, and as smooth as cream.

'Sing "Mango Walk", Sam', his mistress commanded him.

'Me nebber did-a go to no Mango Walk,

'Me nebber did-a go to no Mango Walk,

'Me nebber did-a go to no Mango Walk,

'And me nebber tief no Number Eleven!'

sang Sam, and Mary whispered to Jane,

'Number Elevens are mangoes—the nicest, biggest ones of all, rosy and luscious—oh, my! They all came to Jamaica as plants in pots, with numbers on them. Most of them got given names, but Number Elevens were always known by the number only, isn't it funny?'

Sam sang on, one verse for the man who was falsely accused of stealing mangoes, and one for his sweetheart who forgave him:

*'Me just was a-teasing you, love of me heart,
love of me heart,
'Me just was a-teasing you, love of me heart,
'Me know you nebber did-a go to no Mango Walk,
'And you nebber tief no Number 'Leven!'*

And then they all sang the choruses with him. As they sang night came down, the unbelievable Jamaican night, with its black velvet sky scattered with stars as large as half-crowns, and a moon, like no other moon in the world, sailing and shining amongst them.

'It's like Piccadilly Circus', Jane said, and then felt rather foolish. That sky made remarks like that seem very silly. It was a sky to make quite ordinary people write poetry—or at least try to.

'Tomorrow we'll take you to see the bright lights of Kingston', Ted said. 'You can go to an open-air cinema if you like, for we have our gaudy picture palaces, I can tell you. Then you can dance at the Glass Bucket or the Silver Slipper—but not tonight, not tonight! Tonight I want you to see the real Jamaica, which is *all* beauty, and was here when the Arawaks and the Caribs were here, and will be here when we and our vulgar picture palaces and tawdry nightclubs are all gone and forgotten.'

Sam's concert was over all too soon. The children were herded off to a light supper and bed by Mattie, the girls in one room, the boys in another.

But Mattie was not a very strict Nannie. She giggled and gossiped with the two girls as she helped them to undress, folded away their clothes and brushed their hair.

'It lovely and straight fe true, yo' hair!' she cooed over Jane's in her deep voice.

'Nobody's ever said my hair was nice before!' Jane said, surprised. 'Usually they complain about it's being such a dull mouse-colour, and moan about how straight it is!'

'But it is straight hair dat's lovely, young Missis', Mattie sang out. 'Oh yes! Me, I would love to have straight hair! I going to get mine ironed out one of dese days, so it look good!'

'You silly!' Mary said. 'I forbid you! You'll spoil yourself!'

The boys came in to say goodnight, wearing only pyjamas.

'Tell us some riddles', John begged, 'and put us to sleep, Nana! We'll leave our door open so we can hear you!'

Mattie switched off the lights in both rooms, and, sitting in the darkness between Jane's and Mary's beds, she began to chant:

*'Riddle me riddle,
'John me riddle,
'Guess me dis riddle,
'And p'raps not!'*

Then she thought for a long time—and suddenly out came the riddle:

*'Up chim-cherry,
'Down chim-cherry,
'Not a single man
'Can catch chim-cherry!'*

'Smoke!' chorused the two Bannisters at once.

'I don't understand!' Jane murmured.

'Oh, chim-cherry means chimney, I suppose', Mary answered carelessly out of the darkness. 'You see, smoke

goes up and down a chimney, and you can't catch it. Next one, Nana, please!

*'Riddle me riddle,
'John me riddle,
'Guess me dis riddle,
'And p'raps not!'*

chanted Mattie:

'Me fader hab a well at his yard, and it hab no bottom. Guess dat!'

'A well? A well? No, Nana! We give up!' John called, while David and Jane were still struggling with Mattie's pronunciation.

'A wedding ring! How about dis one? Me fader had a grey horse, and when him ride it him hold de tail!'

'I know! A pipe! A man smoking a pipe!' John and Mary guessed it together.

'But a pipe isn't grey!' David objected.

'A clay pipe is a kind of grey—after a bit!' John answered him. 'One more, Nana! One more!'

'You too spoiled!' Mattie protested. 'Well, de las' one, den!'

*'Riddle me riddle,
'John me riddle,
'Guess me dis riddle,
'And p'raps not!
'Rector Protector sen' a de Queen
'Rector Protector dressed in-a green.'*

What's dat one?'

'A parrot! A parrot! A parrot!' the Bannisters cried, 'A green parrot, Mattie, we know that one!'

'Well, a *parrot* can't be a rector!' Jane said, and David called out, huffily, 'I don't see how anyone could be expected to guess that. It's nonsense!'

'Oh well, you're not really expected to *guess* them', Mary

explained. 'You just get told them, and told them, over and over again, all the time you're growing up, and then you just know them, you see; and when you're asked them, sometimes you remember them, that's all. It's a sort of—a sort of traditional thing, you know.'

'Well, that's jolly different from *our* riddles. We get them in Christmas crackers', David said, not much mollified. 'You know the sort of thing, "When is a door not a door? When it's ajar"—'

'We know! We get Christmas crackers out here, too', John said. 'Make it up to Jane and David, and give them a Nancy story, Mattie, will you?'

'It too late now for dat!' Mattie said, and rose to leave them. 'I tell you one tomorrow night if you good. Good night, young Massa. Good night, Marse John. Good night, young Missis, and Miss Mary! Sleep well!'

So Jane and David went off to sleep on their first night in Jamaica, to dream of mountains of food, rivers of ice-cream, songs, games, alligators, and green parrots.

They seemed already to have become part of a world very different from the one they had left behind them. They had become absorbed in the life almost at once. Perhaps it was because they were living as Jamaicans lived, not merely touring the island as sightseers.

Jane awoke once in the night. Mattie had come in to draw the curtains slightly across their open window. The amazing shining moon was looking in, and had thrown a great beam of its powerful light across Jane's face.

'Not good to sleep in de moonlight', Mattie murmured to herself. 'It too strong—it will twist your face, young Missis!'

CHAPTER II

THE OVER-POPULATED PARADISE

WHEN Jane opened her eyes next morning she saw Mary already sitting up in bed with an exercise book open on her knees.

'Hello, Mary! What're you doing?' Jane asked, stretching enormously, and thinking how lovely it was to sleep with only one thin sheet covering you.

'Holiday work', Mary said. 'Look!'

The book was interleaved with cartridge paper. Mary had pressed leaves between the pages, and made some remarkable drawings of the plants, and their fruit and flowers, and cross-sections of them all. Jane was most impressed.

'You *are* clever!' she said. 'And so neat! To think you can do all this, and be good at Latin and maths, too! I've been looking at your book-shelves, and you fill me with despair, Mary!'

'It's my school—you *have* to be good at Wolmer's!' Mary said. 'It's the best school in the West Indies, and it's over two hundred years old, so they're very proud of their teaching there!'

'But you seem to like school, Mary! Do you?'

'Yes, I love it. We all do. I'm going to try for the Jamaican Girls' Scholarship.'

'What's that?'

'It's a government scholarship, and it's judged on the London Matriculation results. They pay your passage to a University and keep you there till you get your degree—I want to go to Oxford! There's one for the boys, too.'

'Will John try for that?'

'No, John's not very clever. But he's good at games, and he's quite a person, so perhaps he'll stand a chance for the Rhodes Scholarship.'

John was thinking of other ambitions in the next room.

'I like cricket best, but soccer's a good game too', he was saying. 'Maybe I'll play in a Test Match for the West Indies one day!'

'Would you like to live here always?' David asked. 'Or will you come home?'

'Oh, I'll stay here! I'll go into Dad's firm', John said. 'Mary might like to live at home though, because she wants to be a scientist, and it's not easy to fit that in out here—unless she came back to teach at the University College of the West Indies, or the School of Tropical Medicine, after she was qualified. But I don't know! She'll probably get married, anyway! Girls usually do, out here!'

Breakfast was another banquet of Jamaican delicacies—mangoes and pawpaw; smooth, golden cornmeal porridge; 'Solomon Grundy' (pickled raw mackerel covered with raw onions, red pepper, escallions, bay leaves, and pimentoes); quantities of toast and butter and sweet *guava dulce* jam (which tasted a little like quince jam) and cups of thick, rich, bitter chocolate with oil floating on the surface.

On their way out of the house they stopped to speak to a yellow-skinned girl on her knees in the drawing room, rubbing the polished floor with half a dried coconut husk spread with beeswax.

'Hello, Lurline!' John greeted her. 'How's your temper this morning?'

'Lurline's a Maroon,' he explained to his cousins, 'so she's very ferocious.'

'I not ferocious at all!' Lurline tossed her head. 'You too teasing, Massa John!'

The Maroons had been runaway slaves armed and left behind by the Spaniards, Mary explained, after the British had driven them out. The slaves had taken to the hills, and lived by hunting pigs and marauding. They had never been conquered, and in the end a treaty of peace had been signed.

Usually the Maroons still lived in their hill villages, but Lurline had been lured away to the bright lights of Kingston.

'Life too dull in Accompong!' she declared. 'I like Kingston better. And, one thing, Massa John, I don't want to call my name Lurline no more. I want to call it Marlene!'

'O.K., Marlene', John said good-naturedly. 'It was Audrey last week', he said to David.

'I going to go to England one day', Lurline said to David and Jane, 'where you backra pickney, you white children, come from! I'se a British subject, and I got a right. Plenty of my family gone over already, and I going to go as soon as dey send de money. I going to have great times over dere!'

'Watch yourself, Marlene!' John said. 'You're better off here!'

But Marlene shook her head.

'Too many people in dis little island', she said. 'It better fe some of us to go away. Dere's not enough work, and dere's not enough food here for us all.'

As she spoke, Ted Bannister put his head in through the door leading on to the veranda.

'You're one of the lucky ones out here, my girl', he said. 'You've got a job. There's no need for you to go chasing off anywhere else. Besides, where are you going to get all the passage money?'

'Oh, I can stow away!' Lurline tossed her head. 'It cheaper dat way! I rather go to the States than England, but they won't have we black people dere no more!'

David and Jane followed their uncle on to the veranda.

'That's one of our biggest problems here in Jamaica', he said. 'People like Lurline and her brothers and sisters are leaving the island in thousands by any ship or plane they can get on, by any means in their power. A boatload of eight hundred of them left Jamaica last week. That sort of thing has been going on for years now.'

'Why do they want to leave this lovely island?' Jane asked.

'I should think they'd hate the cold weather at home after all the sunshine they're used to.'

'They emigrate for the same reason the Scots and the Irish emigrated in the first place, and still emigrate today. They can't make a good living at home. "This lovely island", as you call it Jane, is overpopulated and underdeveloped. In other words, there are far too many people here, and very few factories, and not enough land for small farms for everyone. So a great many people who want to work have nothing to do and no money. They're acquiring a taste for the better things of life, too, which makes things even worse.'

'I see why they try to get off the island now', Jane said. 'No wonder they're pouring into England.'

'They most of them prefer to go to the United States', her uncle said, 'because America is rich, and close to the West Indies. But America has decided to restrict immigration very rigorously. So Britain is the second choice. There's no trouble in going there. As Mother of the Commonwealth, Britain can't bring herself to shut the door to her children.'

'Besides, they can get all sorts of things free in England!' Jane said.

'They can get the benefit of the National Health Services; that's true, Jane, and free schooling for their children, and unemployment benefits at home. In Jamaica there's none of that. The wages are high in England, too, or rather, they sound high to Jamaicans. From here it all looks like a life of luxury.'

'Why don't they just go to other West Indian islands?' David asked. 'It would be cheaper, and they wouldn't be so far from their homes.'

'They do go, some of them, to the other West Indian and Central American places in the Caribbean which need labourers; to Curaçao and Panama, for instance. But only a fraction of them can be absorbed in that way. Besides, it's not a permanent solution, and they know it.'

'Perhaps the other places may be overpopulated too, anyway!' Jane suggested.

'That's very often true. There's the vast undeveloped hinterland of British Guiana and British Honduras, of course. It seems a good plan to send our people there. But it's a very open question, still, what is going to be done about those places. We're by no means sure that there is scope for much development there. Everyone thought it would be possible to ranch cattle on B.G., for instance, but when they actually came to try it, the experiment was a failure. There's a lot of money to be made developing minerals like bauxite in B.G., too, but that only gives work to a small number of specialized labourers. You see, it's not at all simple.'

'Well, I suppose we'll just have to take over all the extra people and look after them ourselves', Jane offered generously.

'That's easier said than done', her uncle replied. 'Of course we'd all like it that way, and just now, at a time of boom, Britain can absorb a great many extra people and give them work. But one can't count on a boom period lasting for ever, and the time may come when even those West Indians who get jobs at home will find themselves out of work.'

'Then they'll *all* have to live on National Assistance!' Jane said.

'That would be lovely if Santa Claus brought all the money needed', Ted Bannister said. 'But there's no Santa Claus to do that. If there are more mouths to feed than food to feed them with, then the cupboard will soon be bare. Do you understand me?'

'Yes', Jane replied, chastened.

'Then, Britain is overpopulated herself. As we all know, she can only keep going by a very artificial way of life. She can't grow all the food her people eat, and has to rely on industry and commerce to buy the food she gets from overseas. Well, a great many people feel strongly that, far from bringing in

any more people from outside, even from her own empire, she ought to be getting rid of about twenty million of her own population and settling them throughout the Commonwealth within the next twenty-five to fifty years.'

'So *we* ought to be emigrating, not Lurline!' David said.

'Exactly. And, finally, there's a tricky point. There's no colour bar and no colour problem in England, and we all hope there never will be one. But can we be absolutely certain that if she imported a really large number of Negro people her own people would be so wise and so tolerant that a colour problem would not arise? It has done so in every other "white" country in the world in which there's a substantial number of black people, you know.'

'It *could* work the other way', Jane declared. 'If people got to know them well, there *couldn't* be a problem! Besides, I don't think we should run away from the problem, we ought to do something about it!'

'I'm not laying down the law, Jane', Ted Bannister said gently. 'Nobody knows the answer. Your opinion is as worthwhile as mine. Think it over, and decide for yourself. But, meanwhile, I shall do my best to discourage Lurline from catching the next boat or plane to England.'

'So shall I, on the whole, I think', David said soberly, and Jane nodded.

'But that's not because I wouldn't love to see her there!' she said, laughing. 'She's a pet!'

Mrs Bannister had some shopping to do, so the children piled into her car, and they drove down to Cross Roads, a little shopping centre not far away. While Mrs Bannister went into Kong's, where she could buy books, groceries, confectionery, and haberdashery, the children went off to buy themselves enormous ice-cream sodas nearby.

'I haven't time to go into Kingston', Mrs Bannister said. 'We'll have to make a big expedition on Saturday morning and see all the big shops then. Today we're taking you to

spend the day with the Rodneys at their banana plantation, Content.'

'I love those Jamaican names like Content and Retirement and Resignation', Jane said, 'it's like the Pilgrim's Progress!'

The Rodneys were waiting for them on their veranda, as they swept up the long drive in two cars. Jack Rodney was well over six foot, and broad and heavy; his wife, Mabel, was small and light and merry, with a wizened little face like a kind-hearted monkey's. Their sons Ben and Claude (or 'Claudie-Boy') were about 15 and 12. Rodney was called Busha (Master) not only by the estate people but as a sort of affectionate nickname by his family and friends.

The house was large and rambling and comfortable, though obviously not excessively cared for. The two stories shook whenever anyone walked across a room, and the Rodneys seemed never to have heard of paint. They obviously spent most of their lives either in the open or on the two verandas, the upper and the lower, which surrounded the house.

'Busha's got a nice property here, Puffer', Ted said. 'He'll take you round after you've had a planter's punch, and tell you all about bananas.'

Busha could hardly wait. He seemed to eat, think, and breathe bananas.

'I used to grow sugar', he said, 'but like a lot of other people I've changed over to bananas. Of course, Panama Disease is the bugbear of our lives, and Leaf-Spot, and all the other plagues that beset bananas. Yacatan bananas are the sturdiest—I only wish they were the nicest as well!'

He put on a great sweat-stained coffee-coloured topee, and led them outside. Mabel stayed to superintend lunch.

They ducked under a barbed wire fence, and were suddenly in a forest of banana trees, their huge green rabbits' ears flopping just above their heads. It was cool and pleasant, and smelled deliciously leafy and waxy.



Picture Post Library

*These bananas are still young and green above the beautiful purple flowers.
The trunk of the tree can be seen on the right.*



ABOVE. 'Bunches' of bananas ready to be taken by lorry and mule cart to the wharf. BELOW. They are loaded into a lighter. The 'carriers' wear ragged clothes for work, but dress smartly afterwards.



'What a grand bunch!' David paused before a tree laden with fruit.

At the same moment Jane squeaked, 'But they're growing upside down!'

'That's the way bananas grow!' Claudie-Boy said scornfully. 'They point upwards. And that's not a bunch, it's a shoot. The rows of bananas are hands.'

'—and each hand has three fingers on it—' his brother added.

'You mean, a banana is a finger?' Jane asked. 'Three fingers on a hand? *That's* not very sensible! It ought to be five!'

'It may not be sensible, but that's the way it is', Ben supported Claudie-Boy, 'and sometimes you have sixteen fingers to a hand.'

'That's right', Busha said, and jolly as he was, he didn't seem to see the joke, either. Bananas were no joking matter to the Rodneys. 'If there's nine hands on a shoot you've got a bunch; and if there's only six or eight hands you've only got a stem.'

Mary stroked a bole, running her hand over its silky, cool surface almost affectionately. 'Believe it or not, it's a lily!' she said to Jane. 'Feel it, isn't it nice to touch?'

'Funny sort of lily', Jane said, 'but I suppose the blossom does remind one a bit of lilies, though it's so dark and purplish, and I always think of lilies as white.'

'What about cutting some bananas, Ben?' Busha suggested. 'Just to show Puffer, here, how it's done?'

'But those bananas aren't ripe!' David protested, as Ben seized a cutlass lying against a tree and brandished it.

'They're ripe for cutting, though not for eating', Busha assured him. 'We cut them green, and they ripen indoors.'

Ben seized the tail of the stem of bananas in his left hand. He swung at the soft trunk of the tree, making a cruel, V-shaped gash.

Jane winced. 'But you're cutting down the whole tree!' she protested.

Ben did not reply. He swung the stem upwards in his left hand, and with another blow cut it cleanly from the trunk.

'You'd better come and manage the property, Jane!' Busha suggested, with a grin. 'It's all right. Once the stem's cut the tree's finished. It only bears once.'

'And then you've got to replant all this, I suppose?' Puffer asked. 'That's quite a job!'

'No need to replant', Busha said succinctly. He pointed to a half-grown banana tree beside the stricken one laid low by Ben.

'That's a sucker', he said. 'That's our next crop.'

'Isn't it sweet?' Grace Bannister cooed over it. 'Such a little darling, exactly like its mother!'

Busha looked disgusted. 'And look down there!' he said.

Just down by the sucker was a third shoot, an even smaller tree sprouting upwards.

'That's the crop after next', Ben said.

'How long—?' Puffer began.

'Nine months before we get the first ratoon', his host answered him. 'That's what we call a crop. Some trees go on ratooning for forty years. But it's a good thing to replant after three or four ratoons. They get a bit untidy, you see! And the fingers start to straggle too.'

He led Puffer off to inspect his irrigation system, of which he was very proud. The fields were drained every three weeks below the surface.

'Bananas like water, more than sugar does', he said, 'but not *too* much underground! The roots get sour.'

'Not *too* much above ground, either, I expect!' Puffer ventured.

Busha understood what he meant at once. He glanced upwards with a shudder.

'Touch wood!' he said fervently. 'But, you know, man, I'd rather have a hurricane than a good blow, in a way; there's no half-measures out here with insurance, and I have to lose nearly all my trees before I get a penny back. (And *then* I only get half what they're worth!) So I'd rather have them all knocked flat and get *something* back than only most of them down and get nothing! It's a queer feeling, to find yourself welcoming a hurricane where you've been scared to death for months one might come; and it's worse to find yourself tempted to go and push over the trees you've nursed like babies!'

'Well, the bad months are nearly over!' Grace Bannister smiled at him, 'Cheer up, Busha!'

*'June—too soon;
'July—stand by!'*

John chanted, and Mary joined him.

*'August—come it must!
'September—remember!
'October—all over!'*

'You can't ever be sure!' Busha said. 'Big blows *have* been known to spring on us in November!'

'Busha, de Missis say lunch is ready', a running Negro announced, and they all trooped back to the Great House.

* * *

Over lunch Puffer and Ted and Busha talked all the time of the island's politics. The names of Bustamante and Manley rang in the children's ears, but they could not understand much of what was said—especially as the party that was called Labour in Jamaica, and which was led by the dramatic Mr Bustamante, seemed much more Conservative than the other one led by Norman Manley, his cousin, Jamaica's dark-skinned 'Prime Minister'.

'There's something going on in the plantation that might interest you as a newspaper man', Busha said after lunch, 'and amuse the youngsters, too. An old-fashioned wedding.'

He led them down the hill behind the house. They heard music before they saw the little collection of huts and the great arch of plaited green coconut fronds before them. Behind it was a newly-built booth, also of green coconut boughs, and a great crowd of Negroes in their best clothes were going in and out of it.

Then they noticed the three Negro women dancing under the arch, each with a large cake on her head.

The centre one, the 'bride cake', was elaborate, layer after layer towering up; each covered with white icing decorated with silver balls. The other two cakes were only slightly smaller. Over the bride cake was a transparent white lace veil.

'Those cakes have been soaked in rum for six months', Ben smacked his chops, 'and they're just black with fruit and raisins! Can I have some Busha, please?'

'Wait till you're asked, greedy!' his father said. 'You'll be offered some, all in good time! *Then* I shan't mind your having some if you can find any room for it!'

'What's that they're singing?' Puffer questioned. 'I can't make it out!'

'“Let the stranger in”, or something like that', Busha said. 'I don't know—they wouldn't tell the Busha!'

An old woman in purple satin suddenly came up to the dancers. She touched the one bearing the bride cake, and, followed by the others, she danced into the hut.

'Meet the bridegroom!' Busha said, ushering the Fulfords and Bannisters in after the dancers, and taking them up to a short, middle-aged man with a nervous little smile. 'This is Canute Carruthers, and he's a great boy on the estate, manages labour very well! Don't you, Canute?'

The cakes had been set out on a trestle-table. The tallest one stood in the middle, the veil still draped over it. There was a row of lighted candles beside it.

'They will burn all night', Busha said, 'and tonight there'll be plenty of cock soup and curried goat and rice to eat, and gallons of raw rum to drink! It's a pity you can't all stay till the singing and the storytelling get into swing in the moonlight—but it does get a bit rough later on. There may be some stick-licking.'

'When was the wedding?' Jane asked sentimentally. 'And where's the bride?'

'The wedding's not till tomorrow afternoon, at the church', Busha answered, 'and they'll all have some big headaches by then, too! Now, I want you all to shake hands with the children. Dulcie, what you done wid de pickneys, eh?'

He was addressing a shy little Negress, middle-aged and grey-haired, in the vernacular. She stood in a corner in a quiet pink silk dress, clasping her calloused hands before her. She smiled at him, however, and called to some young people. They came out, three strapping youngsters, the eldest about 14, the youngest over 10.

'Here's Cynthia, Busha!' she said proudly. 'And here's Courtenay, and Jasmine!'

'Whose children did you say they were?' Puffer asked in an aside. 'Is the groom a widower, or is the bride a widow, or what?'

'Neither. These are *their* children', Busha said. Then, feeling that some explanation was called for, he went on:

'They're a respectable couple—as respectable as you can be without being married, that is. They've been devoted to each other for fifteen years. They say they always meant to get married when they could afford a ring and a wedding.'

'This sort of thing happens all over Jamaica', his wife said, shaking her head. 'They just don't seem able to understand that it won't do—they lost the habit of marriage in slavery

days, and they've never got it back. The Jamaica Federation of Women has arranged mass weddings for couples—they contributed hundreds of wedding rings in America!—and we all try to persuade our own people to get married. They're learning slowly.'

They left the bride and the groom and all the wedding guests jigging in the yard, drinking rum and eating rich cake.

'They'll be at church again in nine days' time—to give thanks for the blessing of getting married. They're good people', Mabel Rodney said. 'Don't judge them too harshly, if you can help it!'

CHAPTER III

CARNIVAL IN CUBA

'WELL,' Puffer said, doing a few steps of what was meant to be a rhumba, and twirling imaginary moustachios, 'well, here we are in Cuba, the land of the Conquistadores—and the Havana cigar!'

Puffer was talking to Jane and David. It was dawn, a pearly Caribbean dawn, and they were all three standing on deck, as their ship passed slowly through the entrance to Havana's beautiful harbour. Just before Puffer had left Jamaica he had made one of his sudden decisions.

'Jane and David must come too!' he had said. 'It's the chance of a lifetime!'

Mrs Sanguinetti had been all in favour.

'I'll stand them that', she had said. 'Make it a present from me to my grandchildren.'

Helen had said, 'I'll send the children to look after *you*, Puffer! You're not safe, left alone!'

'I can't persuade *you* to come, Helen, I suppose?' Puffer asked, looking wistful on purpose.

Helen had shaken her head lazily.

'No, Puffer. Not this time. I'm a real Jamaican, you forget. I believe Jamaica is the only place in the West Indies worth seeing!'

Puffer knew that what she meant was that she wanted to stay with her mother, and look up old friends. He did not press her.

So here they all were.

'Short geography lesson, my children', Puffer announced. 'Columbus, you must know, firmly believed he was approaching the mainland of Asia—the province of Cathay, to be exact—when he came to the West Indies, and that is how they came to be known as the West Indies.'

'I knew *that*', David and Jane both said.

'Don't be so scathing to your poor old father', Puffer said, not to be damped. 'I'll bet you didn't know, anyway, that Columbus refused to believe the natives when they told him Cuba was an island, because it was so long! Besides, they'd told him there was "gold in them thar hills", so he was *quite* sure he'd got where he wanted to.'

They passed the fortress of La Punta on their starboard side.

'The Captain told me chains used to be stretched across from it to close the harbour's mouth', David contributed.

'Look out for El Morro', Puffer warned, indicating the ancient castle which rose on the port side. 'The red and yellow colours of Spain—red for blood, yellow for gold—flew from its highest point for over three hundred years, and the Spaniards kept Drake at bay from El Morro. Cromwell's men, too.'

'It still flies a flag,' David pointed to it.

'That's the Cuban Republic's single star. But the old bronze cannon—The Twelve Apostles—still face the harbour.'

As the ship steamed on, Havana grew clearer before them, like a fairy city. Palaces, domes and summits rose into the sky.

'But it's *lovely*!' Jane cried.

'It's fabulous', Puffer said soberly. 'You wait till we go ashore.'

* * *

Ashore, the little party walked in old Spain. Havana was another Old Castile rebuilt across the seas.

'The Spaniards brought their best architects with them', Puffer explained. 'Cuba was their only colony, and a quarter the size of Spain. They built with beauty and with love, in stone and marble. *We* built like fly-by-nights, in timber and brick, as if we couldn't be bothered to do more than squat!'

At first they had the city almost to themselves. They wandered about the plazas and the colonnades, the parks and shady avenues, gazing at courts, arches, gates, and cloisters. They admired the colossal white marble Capitol, the State Parliament, with its dome 308 feet high, which had cost

seventeen million dollars to build in 1929, as everyone on the ship, one after another, had told them.

As the sun rose the wide streets began to fill. Expensive American cars came swishing by, polished like jewels, looking like gigantic beetles. Young men wearing straw boaters and carrying canes strolled along, their legs clad in white flannel trousers with narrow black stripes.

'That must be a Cuban speciality!' Puffer commented. 'I've never seen such trousers anywhere else!'

Soon the trams began to rattle along, and boys selling loose cigars, and lottery ticket sellers carrying great boards with the winning numbers displayed in slots, took up their positions on the pavements. And the beggars came out.

They were suddenly around them in dozens. The beggars had recognized them at once for strangers in the city. A mob of ragged men, women, and children followed them everywhere they went, pressing against them, blowing garlic in their faces, gesticulating and chattering all the time in their guttural explosive Spanish.

At first the Fulfords tried to ignore them.

'The Cuban photographers have marvellous people to work on!' Jane said, staring into a shop window. 'What lovely mothers, with their fat, dark babies, like Madonnas! What holy-looking little girls in their confirmation dresses and veils! And what beautiful, beautiful brides! They're *all* so sad and mysterious-looking!'

'That's just the photographers', David said cynically. 'Everyone in Cuba can't be beautiful. Anyway, look at the men, *they* aren't!'

'I think the men are beautiful, too', Jane said. 'Very handsome, I mean.'

'Jane, I thought you liked virile, masculine types!' Puffer rebuked her. 'Like me! Do you really mean to say you admire those—those—' he came to a standstill as he contemplated the wavy-haired, flashing-toothed men who stared

back at him through the plate-glass with their liquid eyes fringed with long feathery lashes.

'I do, and the camera cannot lie!' Jane maintained, obstinately.

'We'll see about that! I'll take you up on it!' Puffer said. 'And get rid of these leeches, too, at one blow!'

The shopkeeper had taken down his shutters. They marched into his premises, and, each one in turn, sat before his hooded camera. Jane sat bolt upright, feeling shy and bony and stiff, conscious of a peeling nose and freckles, the broad, thin, unnatural smile which she always produced for photographers spreading across her face. Still, it would all go to prove her point in the end.

David and Puffer just sat, looking exactly like David and Puffer.

Puffer gave orders, mostly in signs, for he had no Spanish to speak of, that the pictures should be rushed, so that they should have them before leaving Cuba, and asked for them to be sent to the airport. Then they walked out into the sunlight again.

The beggars had waited for them. They rushed over in a mob at once. Then Puffer, always impatient, became angry. Flailing out with his arms, he fought his way to a café table. There he would be safe, he thought.

The *limosneros*, however, surrounded him, clawing at his sleeves with their dirty hands, and pleading eloquently for money.

'Save me, children! Save me!' Puffer pleaded, 'I give up! I can't even *see* Havana for these people, and just look at that policeman-fellow over there! He doesn't give a hoot!'

The little policeman in a uniform of stiff and shiny blue, armed with both a revolver and a truncheon, was certainly taking no notice. He was staring, dreamy-eyed, at them, and whistling a merry tune—a rhumba it sounded like.

'I have an idea', David said. He pulled the little Spanish

phrase-book he'd been studying on the trip across from his pocket. He gestured to the waiter in a long apron who was hanging about.

'*Traigame pastel, dulces!*' he said slowly and clearly.

The waiter bowed, and returned with several slices of cake and some pastries.

Then David went over to one of the beggars, a boy, who looked intelligent and rather cleaner than the others. He talked earnestly to him, now looking at his little phrase book, then pointing to the plate and to the other beggars, who were still milling around Puffer and Jane. 'Vamoose!' he kept saying, because he had an idea it sounded Spanish. 'Vamoose!' and he jingled the coins in his pocket all the while.

Within a few moments the pavement was clear. The boy had shoed all his companions away, with much shouting and many gestures.

David handed him the plate of cakes and pastries, and he gobbled them where he stood.

'Wonderful boy!' Puffer said, cheering up. 'Wonderful boy! I am very proud of you. Sharp wit and presence of mind. Anyone could tell you are my son!'

'Oh, I read somewhere in a book that that was what to do!' David said modestly.

'Those cakes look good', Jane said, watching the beggar-boy eat. 'I'm hungry!'

'We haven't eaten since dawn, after all', Puffer said. 'You're so good at this lingo, David, I think you'd better carry on.'

So David ordered more *pastel* and *dulces* and some biscuits—*bizcochos*—for good measure. He achieved some *café con leche* (coffee with tinned milk, surprisingly) for Puffer, and some *limonada natural* for Jane and himself, with sliced limes floating among the ice.

'Find out how much we owe the fellow', Puffer asked, and paid up. Then he gave David and Jane some of the money he had left.

'May I buy a lottery ticket, Puffer?' David asked at once.

'No, why should you?' Puffer said crossly. 'I don't approve of gambling!'

'Just for fun!'

'Oh, well', Puffer relented. 'Well, just this once, for the experience, *not* "just for fun", and because you rescued me from death at the hands of Cuban *banditti*!'

So David ran across the pavement to a straw-hatted man, in a shirt like a draught board, bearing one of the great lottery display boards. He handed him some money, and took a ticket from him.

'I expect I'll win a fortune!' he smiled, as he returned to his family.

'And I expect you'll lose your money, you silly boy!' Puffer grumbled. 'It may teach you a salutary lesson, that's one good thing!'

He gave a coin to the beggar-boy, lecturing him on bad manners, though he knew he could not understand a word he was saying.

'Find me a taxi, David', he ordered. 'We'll collect our luggage and go to the hotel now. It's the Hotel Ribras.'

The beggars reappeared from nowhere as soon as the taxi arrived and jumped on its running-boards, thrusting their heads and hands inside.

The driver went at a great pace, shaking them off like flies. Whenever the cab slowed down in the traffic, others jumped on. There was nothing more David could do.

At last they reached the hotel. A message was waiting for them from Hernandez Fonseca, a friend of the Bannisters. His car would be at the hotel at half past ten to drive them to his house.

'He's a big man in rum here', Puffer said. 'He ships it abroad, or something.'

The large car with a uniformed chauffeur at the wheel

drove them smoothly through the narrow streets, past houses with doors as big as barns, with smaller doors cut in them for everyday use, through which they caught enchanting glimpses of enclosed *patios* and wrought-iron staircases.

The car drew up, and the chauffeur leapt out to rap three times with a knocker in the form of a dangling hand holding a ball in its fingers.

There was a long wait. ('*Mañana*', Puffer murmured. "Tomorrow", as the Spaniards always say. Time doesn't matter here!') Then there was a noise of steps, and a fumbling with chains. At last a graceful coloured woman with several gold teeth, gold hoops in her ears, and a full-skirted cotton frock opened the door.

She showed them into a *patio*. It was tiled in blue, and full of white roses. A little fountain shot its spray upwards.

Señor Fonseca was with them in a moment, welcoming them with glad cries and a wonderful flow of mixed Spanish and English. He seized both Puffer's hands, and for one awful moment Puffer thought he was going to kiss him, but he did not.

Señor Fonseca was about fifty. He was rounded and glossy from the top of his thick, straight, well-oiled black hair to the toes of his shiny black-and-white shoes with inch-thick *crêpe* soles. The ends of his sweeping black moustache were waxed. His eyes were large and black and glossy behind polished glasses with very thick tortoiseshell rims, and his teeth were white and sparkling and strong-looking. He wore a white suit so stiffly starched and so crisply ironed that it looked as if it was made out of some plastic material. His satin tie was large and flowing—orange, with blue and green bubbles all over it. It was clipped to his pale green nylon shirt with a gold tie pin and on his plump soft fingers were two heavy gold rings, one of them set with a large diamond.

Señor Fonseca bowed from the waist, and made a graceful speech, offering his house and everything in it to his three

guests, with almost embarrassing hospitality. He begged them to sit down and have some coffee.

'Inez, the Señora, my wife, will come presently!'

'I'm so thankful you can speak English!' Puffer puffed, subsiding on an ironwork bench and fanning himself with his hat.

'Everybody' in Habana speek English', Señor Fonseca smiled. 'I ver' bad, ver' bad. I ashamed.'

The maid brought a tray of coffee, hot and black, in little black cups and saucers.

'*Café expresso, eh?*' Señor Fonseca enquired, one thick dark eyebrow shooting up behind the tortoiseshell rims of his glasses. 'You like? No?'

Puffer had not the heart to say he had just had some coffee. He took another cup.

Jane's eyes were glued to an upper balcony. A cage hung from its edge, and in it was a fantastically coloured parrakeet.

'I just don't believe it!' Jane said to David. 'Those colours can't be true! Why, it's green and scarlet and yellow, with bright blue trimmings!'

The gaudy bird had been asleep. Their voices had woken it, and it began to shriek raucously.

'Hongry, I expects!' Señor Fonseca said. 'The children will feed heem! Ah, here is Inez!'

Señora Fonseca was a coldly beautiful person—it was surprising to find so reserved an air with such warm colouring, for her long hair was ebony-black, and her lips were bright red. She was dressed in dove-grey silk, with much lace and delicate jewellery. Her hands looked as if they had never been used. Indeed, she treated them as if anything but the gentlest contact with anyone or anything would cause her unbearable pain. Jane, who was very romantic, thought of the word 'patrician' as soon as she saw her, and admired her proud profile.

If the Señora looked cold, she gave her guests a very warm and sincere greeting, however, welcoming them to her house as fervently as her husband had done.

She took a seat in a basket-work rocking-chair under the old pear-tree by the fountain, and took up a cup of coffee.

'It is ver' interesting, eh, Señor Fulford', she enquired of Puffer, as she played with her coffee spoon. 'This travelling about?'

Puffer gained the impression that life would slide by in that *patio* very pleasantly and calmly, and that suddenly you would wake up to find that ten years had gone by. Yet Señor Fonseca was a man of the world, and a very successful one. He had 'big interests in the rum business', Puffer had been told. Perhaps his quiet home shut off from the world was a refuge from the busy, noisy life he had to lead outside it.

The Fonseca children, Conchita and Luis, ran in, pulling along with them a soft grey monkey on a silver chain. The little marmoset came in, excitedly leaping and hopping and squeaking, as happy as a third child. Jane almost expected to hear him break out into fluent Spanish, like the parrakeet. Their father greeted his children with cries of joy, and took Conchita in his arms and hugged her.

It occurred to David that the life in that household was no different from what it had been when the house had first been built, hundreds of years before, however different it was outside it.

Conchita was 12. She was a dark beauty like her mother, but less cold in manner. Her hair fell to her waist, her lashes were incredibly long, her legs and arms rounded and dimpled.

'Why, she's just like a doll!' Jane thought. 'I really had no idea people were made like that! I thought it was just the way artists and sculptors wished they looked!'

She covered her own rather bony knees.

Conchita's clothes were as much finer than the Jamaican children's as theirs had been finer than Jane's. Conchita wore an elaborately embroidered dress of soft rose-pink silk. There were little filigree gold earrings in her ears, and a fine gold necklace with a golden cross round her neck. The gold

watch on her left wrist was small and jewelled, and the bracelet on her right arm bore a golden medallion with a picture of the Madonna and Child enamelled on it in bright colours.

'I suppose it must be rather fun to be dressed up like that all day!' Jane thought, a little enviously. 'Then she noticed how Señora Fonseca gestured Conchita to a chair, and how carefully Conchita smoothed her pretty dress before perching on the edge of it. Then Jane thought, 'Oh well, perhaps I have more fun! I do like to forget my clothes, and sprawl, and not mind when I get a bit crushed—or even mucky!'

Luis was only 4. He wore a sailor suit—all the little boys in Cuba seemed to wear sailor suits or cowboy suits—and he was as round, as curly-haired, as dimpled, and as dark-eyed as Conchita. He sat in a corner playing with the monkey, staring with big eyes, but saying nothing, while Puffer discussed old and modern Cuba, and Jane and David tried to talk to Conchita by signs. Conchita was shy, however, and had little to say.

They had a delicious lunch, eaten off a dark, polished, mahogany table spread with a cloth richly embroidered by Señora Fonseca herself. All the furniture was dark and polished and ponderous, and there was much old silver on the table and on the sideboard.

'They ate *tortillas*—mashed potato and onion omelettes—and had large helpings from a platter of rice and chicken glistening with pimienta slices, and at the end a caramel custard.

Lunch went on until after three o'clock, but in the end the Señora bade them farewell and mentioned her *siesta*, her afternoon sleep.

'Usually, I go sleep too!' Señor Fonseca said, 'But today I take you out to get a cigar!'

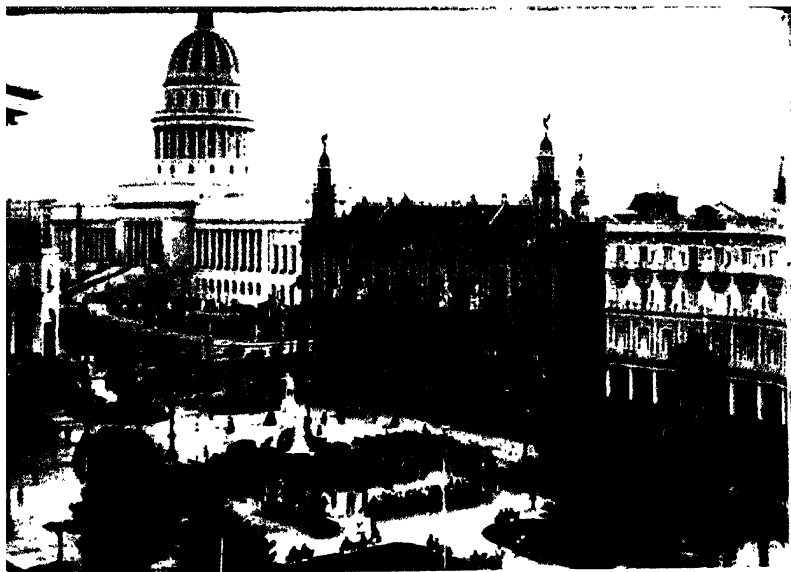
He had arranged for them to pay a visit to a cigar factory where the manager was a friend of his.



ABOVE. The customer tries a bit of sharp practice, and gets her arm pinched for her pains! The fish hooked on the scales acts as an adjusting weight.

BELOW. A Jamaican peasant house.





ABOVE. *The centre of Havana, Cuba.* BELOW. *Cuban cigar-makers at work.*
At least one of them still seems to enjoy smoking them too!



Fernando Martinez, his friend, spoke very good English. He was very proud of his factory, which was a large one, and employed about four hundred people. He led them straight away into the large room filled with rows and rows of tables where the *cigarreros* (the cigar-makers), sat at work, each with his number clearly marked before him or her.

The men wore collarless shirts, usually brightly striped, and their coats were thrown over a nearby bench. Many of them kept their straw hats on as they worked, however. The women wore light cotton dresses, and they also seemed to feel the heat.

Men and women worked with a very delicate touch, picking out leaves for the fillings, carefully choosing others to wrap them in, rolling them round the fillings slowly and meticulously, and pressing gently all the time to see there was no hardness or bumpiness inside. Finally the ends were closed with a sharp twist.

'How much do these people earn?' Puffer asked.

'One of our *cigarreros* can get about \$125 a week. That is good pay, especially as we have a five-day week in my factory. But he must be a very good *cigarrero*, and make only the very best cigars.'

'What's he doing?' David asked, indicating a man with a newspaper who had just come in and was taking his place on a tall chair on a slightly raised dais.

'Oh, he is going to read to them! To entertain them. It is very boring work, making cigars, and it is so hot here, too, that if we did not have a man to read to the workers they would all fall asleep. They each pay ten cents a week, and choose someone they like.'

The reader began to read as the manager spoke, in a clear, rather sing-song voice.

'He reads very clearly, no? He gets good pay, and he likes his job.'

'How long does he read at a time?' Jane asked.

'He comes twice a day, and he reads for about an hour and a half at a time. The workers like him better than a radio set.'

'What does he read?' Puffer asked. 'That's a newspaper he's got there, isn't it?'

'He reads what the people want. Sometimes it is a travel book, and sometimes a Spanish classic. Today he is reading the *Havana Post*. That paper is on the side of the government.'

'Is that so unusual?' Puffer asked, catching something in Señor Martinez' tone.

'Oh, unusual, yes! Always unrest in Cuba, you know!' He shrugged his shoulders. 'Always fighting, we Cubans, wiz daggers, wiz knives, or wiz fountain pens, in the newspapers—one thing or another!'

'Now they've just finished a hundred cigars', Señor Fonseca pointed out. 'See, they're being collected for sorting.'

'What makes Havana cigars the best in the world?' Puffer asked.

'It is the tobacco', Señor Martinez said; and he explained that the Havana district was particularly suitable for growing tobacco, which needed special conditions of warmth, moisture, and plenty of air, but no wind.

Jane was fascinated by his description of the *hoyos*, the low-lying plains surrounded by sheer cliffs, where the very best tobacco was grown. They could be reached only by long ladders set against the cliffs, and the oxen used to plough them were lowered down into them when they were calves, and stayed there until they died.

'What a small world they live in!' Jane exclaimed.

Tobacco plants were grown from seeds sown in nursery beds and planted out on ridges about three feet apart. The plants grew very quickly, and were six feet or more in a few months. They had to be kept free from weeds and insects, and 'topped' to stop seeds forming. Only a few leaves, usually about ten, were left on each plant, so that the main ones got all the nourishment.

When the chosen leaves were finally picked they were strung on wire or string, and hung up on poles in thatched drying-sheds. They stayed there for two or three months, turning golden brown and crisp, then were packed into bales weighing about a hundred pounds.

'And so they come to us!' Señor Martínez said. 'We do everything else here; we even print our own labels and make our own boxes. Now come and see one of the world's best cigars made.'

So they watched the cleverest 'operator' of all wrapping his fine selection of fillings into a leaf, rolling it into shape, and finally wrapping it spirally in the outer single leaf.

'Now make another one', the manager said to him. He presented one to Señor Fonseca and one to Puffer. Puffer began automatically to remove the band, then he noticed that Señor Fonseca had left his on and was already puffing away. So Puffer did the same.

'Is good?' the workman asked.

'Very good', Puffer agreed.

'These men are allowed to make six cigars for themselves every day', the manager said. 'They are very happy in their work!'

After their walk to the factory, they strolled to the famous Plaza del Armas, once the parade ground of the city. Señor Fonseca pointed out La Fuerza, the oldest fortress in the western hemisphere, and the fine City Hall, of which he was very proud.

Once a great silk-cotton tree had stood in the square, he said, and when the City was founded four hundred years before, Mass had been celebrated under its branches. There Columbus's coffin had once rested, too. The old tree had long gone, but now there was a new silk-cotton tree where it had once stood, the silky fibrous white tassels which were its blossoms looking delicate and decorative. Gazin, at it Jane could understand the reason for its name. In the courtyard there was a bust of Columbus and a little stone shrine a hundred years old, known as El Templete.

'Now, we go for a drive!' Señor Fonseca said, and the chauffeur drove speedily outwards from the city.

As they sped along Señor Fonseca pointed out houses built by rich Cubans and Americans. They all seemed to cost a great deal of money—Señor Fonseca always knew exactly how much—and some of them were very ostentatious.

'Look at thees one', Señor Fonseca waved his cigar at it. 'The man who build 'zat house make his money from beer!' There was a drawbridge, and a portcullis and a mother-of-pearl floor inside, it seemed. 'It cost one million dollars to make zat house!'

They had seen a great deal of rich, modern vulgarity by the time they reached the Country Club. There they had a closer look at the ultra-modern luxury of which Havana was so fond in its many casinos, ballrooms, swimming and country clubs, its public buildings, its race-courses and golf-links, and which certainly achieved a kind of magnificence, if not beauty.

The Country Club was impressive. It had a large swimming pool, verandas, many public rooms, and a ballroom. It was full of men, even at that time of day, and a great many smartly dressed women wearing fashionable hats were sitting about.

'Zere are not many places we let our señoras go out to!' Señor Fonseca said. 'I'hees is one of zem. We love our women too moch to let them go out alone!'

Señor Fonseca laughed gustily at the shocked expression on Jane's face.

'You will see bars on some of ze windows in Cuba!' he said. 'That is to keep the young girls in! When Conchita is as old as you, Juanita, she will never go out without a *duenna*!'

'What a bore!' Jane said, forthrightly, 'I shouldn't like that at all!'

* * *

They were back in Havana before sunset, and Señor Fonseca insisted that they must join the other citizens in the traditional evening promenade on the Prado.

The Prado was the loveliest sight in a lovely city. The wide white marble pavement of the promenade was lined with shady trees. An endless stream of traffic flowed by on either side while men and women, changed and dressed in their best in preparation for the evening, strolled leisuredly by, seeing and being seen.

Señor Fonseca drove them back to their hotel by way of the Malecón, the broad and magnificent highway running the whole length of the northern sea-wall, which bordered the harbour. It was almost as lovely as the Prado.

'The Prado and the Malecón, they are unique', Señor Fonseca said, tears of love and pride in his eyes. 'They are *zee mos*' beautiful two things in the Caribbean.'

'Any city in the world which had two such features would be entitled to fame', Puffer said sincerely. 'Havana is a truly beautiful city.'

Before they went to bed that night Puffer and Jane and David strolled once more on the Prado. Then Puffer packed off his son and daughter. 'Go to bed!' he said. 'I am going to see Havana by night.'

'Do you think you're really safe to go out alone?' Jane asked him seriously. 'In a strange city?'

Puffer did not deign to reply.

* * *

He came back very late. He had been to one of the splendid casinos of Havana, he said, and lost some of his Cuban money.

'You who were so very pompous about my lottery ticket!' David said indignantly. 'Oh, Puffer, how *could* you?'

'Why, for the *experience*, of course!' Puffer said. 'For the sake of my paper! A good journalist must go everywhere, and do everything!'

He had also discovered a large and flourishing Chinatown. There were twenty-five thousand Chinese in Havana alone, he had been surprised to find. So he had gone into a tea house, and into another house which he was sure was an

opium den, and, finally, into what seemed to be a sort of temple. There was the great golden altar at one end, and perfumed sticks of burning incense everywhere, to say nothing of several images of Buddha set against the walls. Grave-faced Chinese had watched him silently but suspiciously until he had gone out.

'Oh, Puffer, I do envy you!' Jane said. 'You *might* have taken us! You're as bad as Señor Fonseca, with his bars across windows!'

'A few bars would do you a power of good, I shouldn't be surprised!' Puffer said heartlessly. 'Now, sleep, both of you!'

The next day Señor Fonseca seemed anxious to get them outside Havana. He made several different suggestions, all leading out of the city.

Puffer insisted on learning a little more about the capital, however; so Señor Fonseca swished them quickly along to admire the Cathedral; the residences of the former Spanish Governor-General and the Bishop; three theatres; the opera house ('one of the most beautifullest in the world!'); the Hotel Nacional, with the marks of the fighting which had taken place there when the Presidente Fulgençio Batista y Zalvidar had first come to power still evident; both of the two public squares once again; and all the fifty fountains of Havana.

Then, he insisted, they *must* drive out, eat at a country hotel, and see a game of *jai-a-lai*—"The game they call *pelota* in Spain. You know all about *Habana* now!"

Indeed, Puffer forgot Havana, and all that he hadn't seen and done there, as he watched the game, and before long he was thanking Señor Fonseca for bringing them out.

'I've never seen anything like it!' he said enthusiastically. 'It's absolutely wonderful!'

The players had to catch the ball in narrow curved baskets fixed to leather gauntlets which were strapped to their right hands. They were wiry and alert, and seemed to find no

difficulty in reaching the ball and slinging it the whole length of the enormous court.

'Must be thirty or forty feet wide, that court!' Puffer estimated. 'And every bit of three hundred feet long!'

'*Si! Si!*' Señor Fonseca agreed, 'and zis is the ver' best of all zee ball games. It take all your energy, and all your strengt', and ees most difficult!'

It was decidedly strenuous, and intricate too.

Like tennis, it was played as singles or doubles, David noticed. He would have liked to have a go, but he could see that without much practice you would be useless on a *pelota* court.

'This is *cesta*. There are different kinds of *pelota*', Señor Fonseca explained. 'In Spain they play with bare hands too, sometimes. They hit hard, too, then!'

He put a ball in David's hand. It was very light, and was made of indiarubber covered with leather. Señor Fonseca was saying that after a hard game played with bare hands the hands would swell up enormously. In fact, he said, he had once seen a player in Spain lie down on the concrete floor, so that his partner could tread on his hands and reduce the swelling!

'Ugh!' Jane said. 'I don't think that that is a very nice game!'

The players had to be in the prime of condition, wiry and agile—and ambidextrous.

'Unless you learn to play when you are ver' young—no good!' said Señor Fonseca.

Which was just what David had thought.

* * *

As time went on Puffer grew more and more anxious to return to the capital.

'Don't forget I'm catching a plane tonight!' he said, but Señor Fonseca seemed so reluctant to move that he almost began to suspect that he wanted him to miss the plane!

'First we eat, eh?' he suggested, and off they drove to a pretty, vine-covered inn.

It was night when they drove in at last. At once they saw why Señor Fonseca had been keeping them prisoner all day.

They had returned to Havana in carnival!

'A surprise! Beeg surprise!' Señor Fonseca clapped his hands and smiled from ear to ear. 'I see you do not know! It is a special carnival—we do not have many at dis time of de year. You did not even notice the grandstands built on the Prado! So I keep secret, and show you *Habana* in carnival!'

A mob was milling everywhere. They forced their way through the crowds to the Prado. It was no longer a quiet promenade. Policemen roared by on motorcycles. Huge floats came by to the sound of music, bearing beauty queens, half-naked savages, boy scouts, masked clowns, cowboys and Donald Ducks, Chinese mandarins, musicians, and Eskimos. There were mountains of flowers everywhere, on the floats, and on the streets, the girls were loaded with flowers, and there were lights by the thousand and in the most unexpected places.

Great green dragons made of papier mâché and lit from inside winged their way over their heads, or seemed to, their spiked tails alone hundreds of feet long. Lighted castles, pagodas, palaces, and temples made of scintillating tinfoil sailed shakily by across the black velvet sky, putting out even the Caribbean stars; and lanterns borne on poles fifteen or twenty feet high reared up as if to take their places. Most strange of all were the men on stilts, enormously tall, enormously thin, their long striped legs topped by grotesque masks—of clowns, of saints, of Negroes, of dogs, cows, and horses. The horses were the most eerie, nodding and dancing and tossing their manes in a weird dance.

Bands of musicians made music in the streets, hidden away or on passing lorries. Everybody was dancing, singing, shrieking, throwing things, and laughing. At one stage they

must have watched three or four hundred people go by in the procession, performers and citizens of Havana alike dancing a seemingly endless conga—a great living, undulating snake which never seemed to come to an end.

‘To think we’ve got to go almost at once!’ Jane sighed, watching a tumbling dwarf turning cartwheels at her feet. ‘I can’t bear it. I’d like to watch all night!’

‘We’ve got less than half an hour to catch the plane!’ Puffer fussed, disentangling himself from a paper streamer thrown by a dancing girl, throwing away a rose that had been thrust into his hand, and brushing confetti out of his hair. ‘We’d better get cracking if we’re to fight our way back through this crowd!’

Even Señor Fonseca gave way then, and they began to move back to where they had left the car.

Just then a round little man wearing a paper cap and blowing a tin trumpet seized David’s arm.

‘I look everywhere for you all day!’ he panted. ‘Nobody know where the English tourists are! I congratulate you! You ween somezing today!’

He thrust a sizeable packet into David’s hand. Bewildered, David saw that it contained dollar bills.

‘I ween somezing?’ David repeated. ‘I don’t understand! *No comprendo!*’

‘*Loteria!*’ the stranger shouted above the music and the cries. ‘Teekeet! Looky *nombre!* *Si! Si!*’

‘Hurray!’ David shouted suddenly, and did a little dance among the dancers all about him. ‘I’ve won something in the lottery! *Muchas gracias, señor!*’

Then his face fell, and he stood still, buffeted by the crowd.

‘And a fat lot of use it is! We’re leaving Havana—I wanted to get some Havana souvenirs, and everything’s shut!’

‘Not everyt’ing shut!’ the fat stranger said soothingly into his ear. ‘Look dere! An’ dere!’

'David', Puffer commanded. 'Don't you dare make us miss our plane! Five minutes you get, five minutes and no more! I'll time you by my watch! Meet us here!'

He stood, his wrist held rigidly before him, staring at the dial of his watch, an odd sight amid the crowd, perhaps because he was doing something so ordinary when so many extraordinary things were going on.

David tore down the street.

Five minutes later he was back, laden and breathless.

'Not much of a choice!' he panted. 'But I got you sweets, Jane, *guava dulce*, and all sorts of sweet things! And I got some scent and some fans for Gran and Mum and Aunt Grace, and some pretty Spanish-looking shawls. I got some cigars for Puffer and Uncle Ted—and a box of chocolates for Señor Fonseca's family—and look what I got for Puffer, too!'

He held up a pair of the black-striped Cuban flannels they had all noticed.

'Horror!' Puffer regarded them coldly. 'What am I supposed to do with those? And I just hope you've kept enough money to pay duty on all that stuff!'

* * *

Their surprises in Havana were not over. At the airport a parcel which had been specially delivered that afternoon was handed to Puffer. It contained the photographs they had had taken soon after their arrival in Cuba. The plane was about to leave. They had only time to get to their seats, and wave goodbye to Señor Fonseca, clutching his great box of chocolates.

'*Hasta la vista!*' he called over and over again. 'See you again, soon!' and only at the last moment did he make a more final adieu—

'*Adios, señor! Que le vaya bien.* Goodbye, and good luck!' and, finally, saddest and simplest and most final of all. '*Adios!*'

* * *

They relaxed in their seats.

'The photographs!' Jane remembered. 'Let's see!'

Puffer drew them from the large envelope.

Jane sat, her eyes downcast, her lips curved mysteriously into a Mona Lisa smile. Fantastically long, feathery lashes brushed her dimpled cheeks, and her hair had been highlighted and even waved slightly.

David looked ghastly—touched up in pink and blue and yellow. Jane would never have recognized him.

But Puffer was the most intriguing of all. The Puffer of the photograph was the complete Cuban gentleman—with dark, thick hair, all waves and shining lights, with glossy brown eyes and a flashing smile.

'I can't *think* how they managed it!' Puffer worried, fascinated. 'It's a wonder they didn't put rings on my fingers and a cigar in my mouth!'

He giggled suddenly.

'Won't your mother be pleased!'

'You know,' he added, a little wistfully, 'I wouldn't really *mind* looking like that! It's so uninhibited and romantic! Cuban men get a lot of fun out of life. This fellow,' and he nodded at his photograph, '*this* fellow would be good at the rhumba!'

Jane knew how Puffer felt. She remembered the moment when she had longed to look like Conchita.

'You'd better wear those fancy pants I bought you!' David suggested heartlessly, 'and you can practise smoking your cigars with the band on!'

But Jane cut in.

'Don't you, Puffer!' she said. '*I* like you as you are—trying as you are, sometimes!'

CHAPTER IV

HAITI—THE BLACK REPUBLIC

'OH,' Jane said dejectedly, 'I'll never make head or tail of these'

They were standing outside their hotel on the Champ-de-Mars on their first morning in Port-au-Prince, capital city of Haiti. Jane was looking at some notes and coins which Puffer had put in her hand.

'Don't despair!' Puffer said. 'Those are *gourde*, and those are dollar notes. They tell me at the *caisse* inside (note my facile French, children! That means the desk!) that a *gourde* is worth about a fifth of an American dollar. It's divided up into *centimes*—there!—and *cobs*—there!'

'Then you use American money *and* Haitian money here?' Jane asked, blinking a little in the strong, clear morning sunshine.

'Yes, they're both legal tender here. We've got to get it clear—the difference between a *centime* or and a *centime Haitien*, and a *cob*, or *gourde*, and a United States dollar. Still', and he fell into a favourite phrase of his, 'it is not beyond the wit of man to accomplish that, I trust! Let's see what the Haitian Government Tourist Bureau Guide says that they gave us at the airport—thank the Lord it's in English!'

'Why *gourdes*, I wonder?' David asked, having a look over his father's shoulder at the little booklet.

It was then that Monsieur Bobot spoke to them. He was a tall, imposing Negro of middle age, dressed in a black serge suit, a starched butterfly collar, a thick waistcoat crossed by a heavy gold watch and chain, and shiny black shoes. He also wore gold-rimmed spectacles, (*pince nez* or 'squeezers'), and had removed them to glance across at the Fulfords once or twice, as he stood reading a newspaper he had bought from a paper-boy on the pavement.

'Excuse me, Monsieur', he addressed Puffer very formally, bowing from the waist. 'It is evident to me that you are strangers in my country. I can be of help, *n'est ce pas?*'

He explained that he was an ex-Minister of the Haitian Government and loved nothing better than seeing that visitors gained a good impression of his island.

'It explains itself in two ways,' he said, 'the matter of the *gourdes*. Some people, they say the word comes from the old Spanish *peso gordo*! But that lacks the romance! For myself, I like better the other.'

He laughed with delight, gold teeth and gold rims and gold watch chain and gold cuff links all shooting off sparks in the sunlight against the background of his very severe, dark serge clothes.

'*That* story says that our King Christophe of Haiti commanded—no, how you say it—he *commandeered* all the gourds in the kingdom—'

'You mean gourds that grow on trees?' David asked.

'Yes—a gourd—a round thing. Here in Haiti they are all things to all men, especially people in the country—pots and pans and buckets and drinking cups and everything! No King Christophe, he took them away, and he said—"*These gourds, they are money! and to buy anything you will all have to give gourds instead of money!*"'

'It must have been a bit awkward, going shopping with *gourds*!' Jane said dubiously. 'Especially if you had a lot of shopping to do!'

'*Mais, mais, mais*, but it is not so awkward for the people *here*!' M. Bobot replied. 'You see the little donkeys, do you not, all covered from head to tail with gourds? My people carry them in stacks on their heads! They are peasants, used to work. Ninety of them out of a hundre.' cannot read or write, remember!'

'I like to think of my bank manager's face', Puffer said,

half to himself, 'if I went to draw out a couple of thousand gourds!'

'I like your Champ-de-Mars', David said to M. Bobot. 'It's super, with all those trees and the grass!'

'Super?' M. Bobot repeated. 'Oh, I see. Very nice! It is the Place de la Concorde of Port-au-Prince!' he explained, with a very Gallic flourish of his expressive hands. 'It is the heart of Haiti!'

Many paths led through the square. Statues and band-stands were set amongst the trees. Dominating it all was the statue of Jean Jacques Dessalines, Jacques the First of Haiti, Negro Emperor and King.

He was an imposing figure, this Dessalines, with strong, rough-cut features. He wore a great plumed hat and a military frock-coat covered with braid. His epaulettes were so enormous as to seem almost ridiculous, and his cocked hat was too large for him. He had drawn his sword from his scabbard, and it was held up in an exaggerated flourish against the sky. He looked eternally across the square, beyond the dazzling new Government Palace, across the administrative buildings, to the brilliant blue of the bay, a figure certainly a little odd, but with a dignity of its own.

Imitation Tyrolean villas, with steep roofs, outlined with orange tiles, and houses with glass jalousies and Spanish grillework, made an extraordinary background for this extraordinary figure, their tropical pink, daffodil yellow or pistachio green walls forming a rainbow of colour behind the sombre statue.

'You know about Dessalines? But yes? But no?' M. Bobot asked David, and before David could reply, he had embarked on a brief discourse on 'the great liberator', as he called him.

Dessalines had been a slave, and he had never forgotten or forgiven the floggings he had received. In time he had escaped to the hills. Then had come the French Revolution, and his opportunity—Dessalines came down from the hills to lead a

revolution of his own, setting himself in command of the 500,000 slaves of Haiti. At the end of a terrible period of massacre, intrigue, and treachery Dessalines was Governor of Haiti and Haiti was independent. But to be Governor was not enough. Napoleon became Emperor of France; so Dessalines must be Emperor too, Emperor of Haiti.

Dessalines was a brutal and profligate tyrant. Even his soldiers were starved and badly paid. Once more the revolutionaries had risen, and this time it had been against their Emperor and former saviour. Dessalines was assassinated. But in the end it was as the leader of the successful rebellion to free the slaves that he was remembered, and that was why there was a statue of him in the square.

'He would be surprised to see all these white men in Port-au-Prince today. He would not like to see you here, Monsieur!' M. Bobot said. 'Dessalines gave orders to kill all the Frenchmen who dared to stay in Haiti. He was a bitter man! He did not forget, no, never!'

There was a little silence, and then M. Bobot continued.

'But those were bad times, Messieurs, Mademoiselle. The Haitians were not always so bad! In this very place, this Champ-de-Mars, once they put up a guillotine. It was during the French Revolution—and the people tore it down! No other guillotine has ever been set up here!'

It was hard to imagine a guillotine there, as they watched the cars and taxis swooping by—even the taxis were immense, high-powered American cars or station waggon—but now that they knew whom the statue represented the little ceremony they had witnessed early that morning meant more to Puffer and Jane and David.

They had been awakened by a bugle-blast right under their hotel windows. Sleepily they had gone in their pyjamas and dressing-gowns onto the balcony. (It was a relief in a way to be outside, for nearly every wall in the hotel had been done in a different colour scheme and vigorous murals

assaulted the eye wherever they looked.) The Haitian Guard was breaking the colours from a mast among the trees.

An officer shouted, and his platoon of soldiers presented arms. The National Anthem rang out. The bunting jerked up the mast. The few who were about at that hour stood silent, still and respectful in their bearing.

'I do wish we were more suitably dressed', Jane had said.

'It's the tricolour!' David had exclaimed. 'No it isn't! There's no white stripe.'

'The Haitians tore out the white stripe to signify that they had torn out the white race from their lives', Puffer said baldly. The sudden knowledge of that gesture had brought alive to them all how much violent feeling there had been, as nothing else could have done.

Now they asked M. Bobot what the collection of symbols in the centre of the flag meant—palm trees, caps of liberty on pikes, drums and cannon balls, pointing cannon, and half a dozen furled banners radiating like a fan. They had never seen a flag so laden!

It all added up to the Haitian War of Independence, apparently.

'Every picture tells a story, in fact,' David said, 'but these are beastly stories.'

M. Bobot took them across to admire the Presidential Palace at closer quarters. It was indeed an impressive building, its dazzling white broken by multitudes of windows. A dome and two cupolas reared into the sky, and it all sat solidly on spreading greensward.

'At night, on the great occasions', M. Bobot said in his meticulous English, 'that magnificent edifice is decorated with thousands of lights! I heard an Englishman say once that it reminded him of Blackpool!'

'Very nice', Puffer said keeping a straight face with difficulty.

'And at the very top, on that dome there, one puts the flag



ABOVE: A 'street' in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, all heat, squalor, and powdery white dust, in which children and dogs play. BELOW: In contrast, the old and the new Catholic cathedrals of the Haitian capital.





King Henry Christopher's citadel towering into the sky like the prow of a great ship

of Haiti in neon-lights! They flash on and off, on and off, every second, like that, as if it were a breeze which blows it so gently. And then we have fireworks—oh, it is beautiful! Beautiful!’

M. Bobot went on to describe garden parties in the Palace, with footmen, and dozens of brilliant uniforms, with silver trays laden with champagne, and an orchestra under the mango trees. And he described the scene at a President’s reception, and became quite emotional about masquerades at Mardi Gras, when during the week before Ash Wednesday you could meet skeletons, clowns, and men on stilts on the Champ-de-Mars.

‘I know, we saw a carnival in Havana!’ Jane said.

‘But it is quite different in Haiti! Quite!’ M. Bobot said indignantly.

‘Before Dessalines there was Toussaint L’Ouverture, wasn’t there?’ Puffer asked, to change the conversation quickly.

‘Ah, Monsieur, Toussaint was the first of the great blacks’, M. Bobot agreed. ‘We have a statue of him too. He came before Dessalines. But it was Dessalines who proclaimed the first Negro republic in the world—on the first day of January 1804.’

‘Toussaint was a slave too, wasn’t he?’

‘He was a slave, Monsieur, merely an old coachman, and nearly 60 when he was first heard of. He rescued his master and mistress from death at the hands of his people, and hid them. He became General Toussaint, and helped the French to press back the Spanish, and the British, too, Monsieur, and then he became Lieutenant-Governor and Chief of the Army. But it was inevitable! France, La Belle France, began to have fear of his great pride. He was a wise man, himself, and a statesman, and a philosopher, but still, in the end, power went to his head, too! He too became a tyrant. Napoleon sent his brother-in-law to defeat the troops of

Toussaint, and to trap and seize the black general. So our Toussaint sailed away a prisoner, and he died alone and cold in a cell in France, a man with a broken heart; slavery was restored, Monsieur, a month after he left these shores!’

M. Bobot paused. He said bitterly: ‘Messieurs, Mademoiselle, Haiti has been soaked in blood time and time again!’

‘Toussaint, Dessalines, and then—?’ Puffer led him on.

‘Toussaint, Dessalines, and then a long, long line of dictators. Let me not deceive myself. That is what they were! Our world-famous Henri Christophe was but one of them. But you must go and see his Palace, and his Citadel, and hear of him there! In all Haiti those are the two most important places you must see!’

‘And Haiti has been quiet since?’ Puffer asked, for he wanted to hear M. Bobot’s interpretation of facts he already knew.

‘Since then the history of Haiti has been as before. Kingdoms! Empires! Riots! Revolutions! Conspiracies! Treacheries! Assassinations! Massacres! We are a violent people. Even the day came when the marines of the United States occupied our island to our shame. But there has been progress too—better roads, better health, better police. Out of the bloodshed something comes—a little, slowly.’

M. Bobot was quite an orator, Jane thought, but there was sincerity under all the rhetoric.

‘It is not possible to understand our Haiti unless her past is known to you’, he said. ‘You know a little now, Monsieur. It is better than nothing. Now I beg of you come with me, permit me to take you and show you Haiti as she is today!’

* * *

The pavements were thick with people. They chattered, they played dice, they were already drinking rum and coffee at little café tables.

There were horses, too, everywhere, and mules and don-

keys, sometimes harnessed, sometimes laden with packages, sometimes barebacked and carrying only a child with a piece of rope for a bridle. Men and boys carried cocks under their arms—even on horseback—for, as M. Bobot said, there was a cock for every human being in Haiti.

It was a Saturday morning, so they were able to follow the market women as they came down from the hills. They found themselves behind one old woman on a mule, a clay pipe in her mouth, a yellow turban on her head, on which she balanced eighteen large straw hats. Jane counted them.

They passed the old and the new cathedrals. The old cathedral opened its doors only on Saturdays to admit the market women. The old woman dismounted and went inside, leaving her hats inside the door, and they followed her in. The low ceiling was pale blue, peppered with gilt stars, and there was a life-sized figure of Christ in a red silk gown brooding over them in the chancel. The deep voices of priests chanted over sobbing organ notes. The market women kneeled before the altar, rich and gilded, with candles winking on it in an incense-laden gloom.

M. Bobot led them to a painting of a saint on a prancing horse—St. Jacques le Majeur. The market women were burning candles before their favourite Saint. They were little tapers, like those on a child's birthday cake, called *bougies*, not the big, heavy ones burnt in European Catholic Churches.

Their old woman lighted her candle, deliberately let it drip on the floor till a puddle of hot wax was formed, and stuck her candle in it. Some of the others had stuck their candles on the wall, some on the columns. It gave a most eerie, but at the same time merry, effect, all the little lights twinkling in unexpected places.

Their peasant woman was now praying to the Saint. Standing erect, she flung out her powerful brown arms and caloused hands, ignoring everyone else. Then at last she touched the picture frame, and scrawled a cross on the wall

with a piece of blue chalk. She crossed herself devoutly more than once, dipped her hand in holy water, then she went out into the market place.

M. Bobot crossed himself too. He dropped a coin in a box and walked after the old woman.

The service would have been more impressive in the Cathedral, if not so simple and moving. In the vast, long, lofty place glittering with glass, gorgeously attired priests would have moved to organ music, and three hundred girls and boys from Convent schools sung for High Mass, antiphonally.

'All Haitians are Christians', their guide said, 'and nearly all of them are Catholics.'

The market place was noisy and crowded. There must have been five or six thousand people in the square, and the sound of their screams re-echoed under the red and green roof—'*Petit pain!*' '*Petit beurre!*' '*Bananes!*' '*Ananas!*'

The wares were spread on stalls, or, more often, on the ground. Grain, fruit, vegetables, baskets, mirrors, pink combs, tinware, soaps, cane chairs, shoes and sandals, bags, jewellery made from old coins, ornaments from shells, vivid straw hats, headkerchiefs, gilt earrings and glass bracelets, handmade utensils, mahogany trays, sacks of charcoal, rice, salt, flour, wooden bowls, beaten copper ornaments, gourds, coloured granite-ware, and painted candles—it was a scene of bewildering variety and colour. The sellers sat on low chairs.

'*Passez! Passez!*' shouted the old woman as she thrust her way through the crowd, using her elbows like weapons.

'*Hé! donnez-moi une gourde, blancs!*' screamed a little boy, and 'Gimme ten cents, boss!' cried another one, who had decided they were English or American.

Fried fish was already smoking in heaps for early lunch or late breakfast. Two or three old crones were stirring pots ranged around them. The ground was slippery with mango-

skins tossed aside by juice-stained children and grown-ups alike.

Puffer fell in love with the outsize baskets he saw everywhere. He picked up one great round one that was at least six feet across, and struggled with the temptation to take it home to his wife.

'But we really can't travel with that!' he decided aloud.

'It's light enough!' Jane tried to persuade him, weighing it in her hands, for it was as light as a feather.

'It's too big!' Puffer said. Then he bought it. 'To put those Cuban trousers and things in', he said, smiling mischievously.

As soon as he had made his purchase he was given a straw hat to wear, and a straw bag in which to carry anything more he might buy.

David had found another stall, from which M. Bobot seemed to be trying to remove him in vain. It held some very oddly shaped lidded pots, and dozens of carved wooden bowls. Some bowls were bound together in twos and threes, like Siamese twins—or triplets—as Jane said, pointing them out to Puffer, for they were carved out of the same piece of wood and had not been separated.

The old woman behind the stall was very tall and very lean, rather sinister looking. Her long head was bound in an enormous kerchief and her upper lip was the longest David had ever seen. Her eyes were blood-shot. David touched a pretty wooden pot, like a vase. 'What's it for?' he asked and then tried in French. 'Pourquoi? *Pour quoi est ça?*' but the old woman merely stared back at him, a sneering look in her eye, without answering.

'*S'il vous plaît, Madame*', David tried again stubbornly, '*Cette chose ici est pour quoi?*' He had done so well with his Spanish, surely his French wouldn't let him down? Was it a vase or a jug? he wanted to know.

M. Bobot was desperately pulling at his sleeve.

'Come! *Venez!*' he said, 'these are not good things, and she is not a good woman, that!' Then he half-whispered to David. 'These things are for Voodoo. Yes, Voodoo! That is black magic, sorcery, and Haiti is a bad place in that way. Come away, *mon ami*. Please.'

David looked curiously up into his friend's face. They made a strange contrast, the very fair, simple English boy and the African Negro with the manners of a Parisian Frenchman. A moment before M. Bobot had been in command of the situation, master in his own country, older, wiser, and full of knowledge. He had laughed, though it was kindly laughter, at David's youth and ignorance.

Now, however, it was David who was calm. M. Bobot was not laughing. There was a look of fear in his face. Could it be that this distinguished and enlightened gentleman believed in Voodoo?

David came away, out of consideration for M. Bobot.

Jane and Puffer had heard and seen all that had transpired.

'How very extraordinary', Jane said, 'that that stall should be right next to the one selling those painted candles and holy pictures and rosaries and plaster statuettes of saints!'

'Haiti is a very extraordinary place', Puffer said. 'They say that after night-long Voodoo ceremonies and frightful orgies the people emerge at dawn and—go to Mass!'

* * *

'I don't seem to be able to make anyone understand my French', David said to M. Bobot, as they walked away from the market. 'I might be speaking Greek!'

'I'm not a bit surprised!' Jane said teasingly.

'It is not your fault, *mon cher* David', M. Bobot said. 'Here only the *élite* speak proper French—'

'The *élite*? That's—'

'The upper crust,' Puffer said, 'the aristocrats, the ones at the top. They are *les gens de couleur*, the coloured people as opposed to the Negroes.'

'The rest of the people speak Creole—that is, a *patois*. It is a mixture of French and African and other things too. It's like the Papiamentu of Curaçao—but you have not been to Curaçao yet, that is so, is it not?'

'Well, no wonder they didn't understand!' David said. 'The trouble is, I speak better French than they do!'

And they went off to find a cool café and a 'rum-soda' to drink—or a cup of coffee.

* * *

They were at Cap Haitien, the most famous place in Haiti.

They had taken an early train for the long journey across country, and had ridden on mule-back through the woods to reach the Citadel of Henri Christophe, famous (and infamous) King of Haiti.

The woods ended. From a rocky peak, suddenly looming above them like the great bow of a ship, rose a formidable castle, grim monument to terrible times. Up and up into the sky the great bastion soared.

Inside, it was cold and dank and dark, silent and ominous. Down they went into the gloomy cellars and dungeons, one after another, stumbling on cannon balls glowing dimly in the sinister half-light, and shuddering at the smell of decay.

Then they went up broad flights of stairs, one stage after another, to reach the roof at long last. Walls ten feet thick had marked the way up, but here there was, surprisingly, no wall. Up there they found a student, tall and lean, standing, hands in his pockets, simply staring.

'This was the parade ground', he said, hearing them wondering about it.

'But there's no wall!' Jane protested. 'It's frightening—dangerous!'

'*Bien entendu*, of course', the young man shrugged. 'Christophe used to drill his men here. Now and then he marched them over the edge, just to prove their unquestioning discipline. He did not *want* a wall.'

'What a horrible man!'

'A great man!' the student said proudly, in his soft, quick voice. 'Everything he did, whether it was good or bad, was big!'

He had been big, too, physically, he said, a giant in height and powerfully built, and a brave man as well, and an intelligent man, and a man of character and taste and culture—yes, a giant in every way!

There had been so many deaths among the workers through accidents, overwork and disease that every one of the great blocks which formed the stony citadel might be said to have been paid for with a human life. The site was two thousand five hundred feet above the sea, and every block had had to be hauled up all the way.

They heard from the student for the first time the tale told most often in Haiti, of how Christophe had ordered a hundred men to haul one of those formidable cannon, which still pointed through the embrasures, up the mountainside. They had declared that it was impossible. So he had had ten of them shot. Next morning he shot ten more, and so on, every day, until on the tenth day the remaining ten men found strength to haul it up alone.

'A terrible man!' Puffer said.

'No, no, a man of men!' the student declared. In the beginning he was wise and good. Later he became too powerful to be always moderate. But Haiti needed such a man at that time. He executed hundreds, and spent money like water, but he hated Voodoo, and was always on the side of the Church. He attempted to achieve the impossible—and very nearly did, too. All this the student told them proudly.

'Why did he build this Citadel?' David asked.

'He was afraid of Napoleon's invading armies. All Haiti's liberators, Dessalines, Toussaint, and Christophe, were inspired by Napoleon and afraid of him at the same time. The

castle was designed to garrison ten thousand men, and there were enough cannon, store-rooms, cisterns, and powder-magazines to keep those ten thousand men supplied with food, drink, and arms in the stronghold for ten years.'

Christophe created a Navy and an Army, founded hospitals, helped the farmers, set up a printing press, built schools, and even inaugurated an academy. His court was conducted on lines of the most formal etiquette, with a new aristocracy from royal dukes downwards; every man, they said, in Christophe's court appeared in brilliant uniform, and no two uniforms were alike—that was the joke that went the rounds in France.

In the inner courtyard of the Citadel was a small white tomb, and a pile of white-washed cannon. Henri Christophe's bones were at last at peace, lying under a bronze plaque—*Je renais de mes cendres*, 'I will rise again from my ashes'.

'I sincerely hope not', Jane murmured, but the Haitian student said 'Haiti could do with another Christophe!'



Below was the ruined palace of Sans Souci, called after the plantation in Grenada from which Christophe had come; Sans Souci, the dream palace which Christophe had built, and where in the end he had taken his own life with a silver bullet.

They strolled under its great gateways rich in pillars, passing by the numerous sentry-boxes; paused by the chapel; mounted the grand staircase; tried to count the rows and rows of windows, and to imagine the black courtiers who once walked along the noble promenade. Rusty nails showed where pictures and tapestries and French looking-glasses had once hung. They could picture the lawns which used to surround the palace, set about with palms and mangoes. As in everything, Christophe had tried for the unattainable. He had sought to build a palace better than any in Europe—

and, as with all the impossible targets he set himself, he had almost succeeded.

His end, like that of all Haitian dictators, was bloody. When everything was at its most awkward and difficult, his people in rebellion, and his enemies armed against him, he was struck down by paralysis. The rumour spread that he was dead. He managed to dress in his glorious white and gold regalia and to stagger out to review his troops, assembled for the occasion, before an enormous crowd. But Christophe could not mount his horse. He staggered and fell, and was carried inside. Then came the silver bullet, a last romantic gesture from a dramatic man—and a hasty burial up the hill in a pit of white lime, with only a few weeping women-folk and a handful of his last few friends about him.

Birds built in the roofs, the mosaic floors were torn up, the panelling had long gone. Grass grew even on the grand staircase, once swept by silk and satin gowns.

‘I don’t know why I should feel sorry for him’, Jane said, ‘he was a beastly man! But I do.’

CHAPTER V

STEPCHILD OF AMERICA—PUERTO RICO

'I THINK we'll look up Mr Omar P. Berger first', Puffer said, 'seeing we're right outside his offices. He can represent the New World. We'll call on our Puerto Rican friends afterwards, and hear what the Old World thinks of the New.'

They were in San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico, where indeed the Old World met the New.

It had been confusing and somewhat embarrassing to find an ancient city masquerading as a busy business centre—like an old lady kicking up her heels in public. Mediaeval castles were next door to modern skyscrapers; trolley-cars rattled by fortress walls; and streets made for horsemen and citizens on foot tried to accommodate hundreds of cars.

The cars had to go painfully slowly. Pedestrians on the pavements blocked others as they stood and chatted at the tops of their voices. Shopkeepers came to stand outside their shops to woo the customers who couldn't crowd inside them. Even the hooting of the car-drivers was drowned by the pleasanter din of the bells—and, of course, there was always room for the lottery sellers, even if they blocked up the entrances to the banks.

Puffer had brought several introductions to Puerto Rico with him, and he had decided to present first the letter he had to Mr Berger.

They went up in a luxurious lift to his office. It was just like one in an American film, they all decided silently, large and bare, with Venetian blinds at the window, a huge polished desk, and a blonde secretary in tight-fitting clothes chewing gum.

Mr Berger worked for an American firm, and was closely connected with the spacious airport built on the spit of land which projected into San Juan's harbour. There must be few

airports in the world so well placed, Puffer had said, convenient for flying boats and landing planes alike. It was busy too—the noise overhead told them that. The route via San Juan connected all the Lesser Antilles and the entire east coast of South America with North America. Miami was only eight hours away by air—in fact, Havana and San Juan were often regarded as suburbs of Miami by American businessmen. From San Juan they could get back quickly to their businesses without any difficulty by plane or ship, and they were kept in constant touch by cable, telephone, and radio.

Mr Berger clapped Puffer heartily on the back.

'Waal, I sure am glad to make your acquaintance, sir! Meet Marge, my stenographer! I only wish you weren't spending such a short time—we'll have to burn up the road if we're going to show you much of Puerto Rico in just a few days!'

'I shan't pretend I'm an authority, I promise you', Puffer said. 'And I'm depending on you to give me the American point of view.'

'You can have the American angle, brother', Mr Berger assured him.

He was a florid man with short-cropped, bristling white hair, bushy dark eyebrows, and rather choleric blue eyes behind rimless glasses. His manner was both boyish and bustling. Now he clapped a straw hat on his head and, giving a hoist to his gaily striped rubber belt, he showed them all three back to the lift.

'I guess we can just do the fortresses before lunch if we scram', he said, looking at his steel-covered watch. 'No, sir, I won't eat at your expense—you're my guest—lunch is on me at my place. Marge, just ring Mrs Berger, will you, and tell her we'll all be coming along together!'

'Waal, Mr Fulford, I guess I don't have to tell you that Uncle Sam took over little old Puerto Rico from Spain just

about fifty-six years ago', Mr Berger began a sort of running commentary as they climbed into his glass-enclosed Cadillac, 'and he's been a sort of step-father here ever since. There's a lot of American capital invested here, a heck of a lot! But there's only one American to every thousand Puerto Ricans, and we've only had a short time here compared to the four hundred years of Spanish rule—Puerto Rico is still Spanish, not American at heart.'

'What are we going to see first, sir?' David asked, getting his camera ready.

'El Morro's our show place, so we'll start there. But we gotta hustle, don't forget that.'

'There's an El Morro in Havana', Jane said. 'Is this a fortress too?'

Mr Berger bristled.

'Oh, yeah—El Morro means a hilltop, and you'll find El Morros everywhere there's hilltops and Spaniards together! But *this* El Morro is unique! It's the *only* rock fortress which has ever flown the American flag!'

'Is that so?' Jane said politely.

'You know something? There are still soldiers garrisoned there, although it's so old. It's no useless ruin.'

El Morro stood at the harbour entrance—and the entrance to the harbour of San Juan, Mr Berger claimed, was better and more beautiful than Havana's.

'It smells better, anyway!' Puffer said. 'I'll give you that!'

Escorted by a soldier, the visitors mounted five successive levels of the forbidding old castle, and descended to the dungeons, to walk along an underground passage which had been blocked up at the far end. At one exciting moment they found themselves standing at the very edge of the Atlantic with its rolling breakers.

David was ecstatically happy, as he examined cisterns, powder-magazines, gun-emplacements, chapels, and soldiers' quarters. He could not have too much of the sally-ports,

arches, battlements and turrets, drawbridges and watergates, sentry boxes, cannon and embrasures in which the fortress was so rich. Jane was strongly reminded of Henri Christophe's Citadel in Haiti, but decided against saying so to Mr Berger.

At the very top they found a modern lighthouse. As they rested there for a moment Jane pointed out a tiny island covered with palms, spray crashing against its rocky shores.

'What a pretty little island! May we go there?'

'I don't calculate you'd like it when you got there, little lady!' Mr Berger said drily. 'It's the Leper Settlement.'

'Never you mind', he added at sight of Jane's shocked and crestfallen face. 'We look after them very well. Soon I'll show you something you'd like better, instead—the Haunted Sentry Box.'

They admired the massive walls.

'Yeah, they're some walls!' Mr Berger agreed nonchalantly with an air of being responsible for building them. 'They kept your man Drake off, anyway!'

'What was Drake doing here?' David pounced on him at once.

'Drake? Doing here? Oh, he was chasing the Spanish galleons, I guess, that was what he was doing!—when they were going home full of gold, you know, they used to streak in here for safety. Then El Morro would beat him off, yes, sir!'

'Well, it must have been very strong to keep Drake off', David defended his hero gallantly.

'To tell you the truth, it's even kept off modern American artillery', Mr Berger conceded. 'Uncle Sam's warships bombarded El Morro once, and, well, they might have been popping garden peas against these walls, just about, for all the results they got! Puerto Ricans hardly noticed there was a bombardment going on. The women went out to market with their shopping baskets, just the same, they tell me!'

'Well, then, you couldn't expect Drake to do much about it!' David scored a point.

'Guess not. You a Drake fan, boy?'

'I admire him', David said.

'Well, I reckon if you'd stood on these battlements you'd have seen Drake's friend, Sir John Hawkins, buried at sea.'

While David was living in the past Jane was interested in the present, looking at El Morro's modern fittings. Electric lights had taken the place of candles in El Morro, there were tennis courts and netball courts on the dried bed of what had once been a moat, and a golf-course between the ancient wall and the ocean. At first it had seemed shocking to her. But it was better, perhaps, than letting the old place stand a dead and empty monument to bygone days. The atmosphere was certainly more cheerful than that in Christophe's Citadel.

'There's going to be a ball here tonight, ma'am', the soldier who was escorting them told Jane, as a party of others arrived with rolls of bunting, and strings of fairy lights, and began to decorate the stony walls. 'Right up here, yes, ma'am, on these stone floors. The officers of the Puerto Rican regiment are giving a party. It's gonna be all lit up on the upper levels!—and there's gonna be a military band!'

Puffer said: 'What a setting!'

'It's a fine sight', Mr Berger said. 'Mrs Berger and I were guests at one once—it's very formal. Now maybe we'd better shoot over to the next fortress, that's San Cristobal. Used to be connected to this one by that underground passage—and it was built a hundred years later about a mile further along the coast.'

Puffer had noticed something, however. Right below El Morro, under the cliff that faced the Atlantic, lay a collection of untidy wooden shacks.

'What's that, Berger?' he asked.

'Well, I guess that's a slum', Mr Berger said flatly. 'It's quite a famous slum too,—La Perla, it's called.'

Some of the houses were made out of planks from crates knocked together. Old kerosene tins filled with water, or

rusting on their sides, lay about. Half-naked children and ragged grown-ups lounged, sitting, standing, even lying on the earth. Scraggy pigs and chickens rooted and pecked at the hard ground.

'Surely human beings don't live like that!' Jane cried.

Puffer said, 'The last time I saw anything as bad as that was in Spain, on a hill near Barcelona.'

Mr Berger said rather shamefacedly, 'Could be that too much is made of it. People are inclined to make more fuss when things are right under their noses, which wouldn't worry them otherwise. Every tourist sees La Perla. Still, it's not pretty, and something ought to be done about it, I agree.'

Puffer liked his straightforward admission.

San Cristobal was larger than El Morro, facing the ocean, on a rocky height at the eastern boundaries of the old city. Modern apartment buildings and stores, and the new Capitol building, were close by. They entered by way of a picturesque ramp, leading to the battery, beyond which lay deep moats and strong outworks.

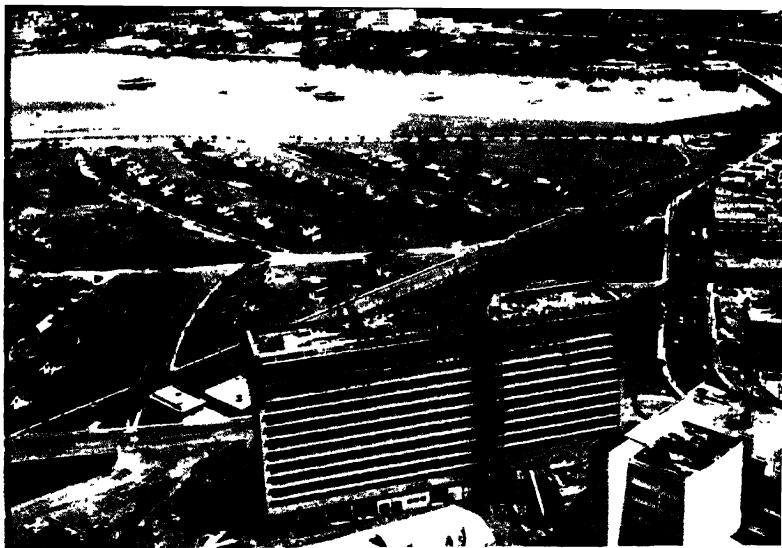
'They fired the first shot in the Spanish-American War in Puerto Rico from this battery', Mr Berger told them, 'May 10, 1898, it was. Fired at U.S. vessels in the harbour, they did!'

San Cristobal had its garrison too, and officers' quarters. As it was so central, it was more a part of the daily life of San Juan than El Morro, but Mr Berger explained that it was not easy to get permission to go inside. But he pointed out the Haunted Sentry Box.

'La Gorita del Diabolo!' he said, rolling the syllables round his tongue. 'There's a legend that soldiers who used to stand guard duty in that box just disappeared one by one. You can see it's a lonely sort of place. When they came to relieve a guy here, he just wasn't!'

'He'd deserted', Puffer suggested.

'No', Mr Berger said, 'he always left his clothes behind—and a smell of sulphur.'



ABOVE. *A view of San Juan, the capital of Puerto Rico.* BELOW. *The ruin of the theatre in St Pierre, Martinique.*





A view on the way to St Pierre, Martinique

'I just don't believe *that!*' Jane said, eyeing the Sentry Box with respect, all the same.

'It happened so often the Commander of the Garrison had to order the post to be abandoned. You can believe that. Otherwise—your guess is as good as mine!'

La Fortaleza was the next stop.

In former days La Fortaleza, where the United States Governor lived, had been the palace of the Spanish Governors; since then it had become the headquarters and residence of the Captains-General of Puerto Rico. They admired spacious rooms with mahogany doors, and fine staircases and arches, and an old watergate.

'Well, what do you think of La Fortaleza?' Mr Berger asked as they came out. 'It's the only place ever to have been under the American flag where you have an official residence with a throne room, old towers, a treasure-vault, secret passageways, dungeons, *and* a spiral stairway. We've got some tradition here, just like you have in England!'

'They were all feeling a bit limp after three visits, but Mr Berger had hardly started his tour.

They saw the Casa Blanca, the mansion built for Ponce de Leon, adventurer-friend of Columbus, whose name was everywhere in Puerto Rico. They saw the white marble Capitol ('Havana's is nothing to it!' Mr Berger maintained). They saw the Condado Hotel, luxurious and ostentatious. They saw the Casino, the centre of social life in San Juan. They saw the Municipal Theatre. They saw statues of Christopher Columbus and Ponce de Leon not far from the cathedral which held his tomb, and heard how Puerto Rico got its name—Ponce de Leon had called out, '*Ay que puerto rico!* Oh what a rich port!'

'So the *port* was Puerto Rico! The *island* started off as San Juan de Puerto Rico. Then it got turned round, somehow, so the island got the port's name and the port got the island's.'

And they heard about Florida Water, the American drink.

Ponce de Leon had been with Columbus when he discovered Puerto Rico, and he never forgot it. Later, he fitted out a caravel, and landed on the island, determined to explore it.

'The natives were the Boriquen. Peaceful fellers! But Ponce's men treated them pretty rough, and killed them off if they didn't do just what they were told. In the end they were wiped out. Ponce had a great hound called Bezerillo to hunt them down with, and that hound got his share and a half of plunder as regular as the men. And that went for gold and slaves too!'

'What on earth could a dog do with gold and slaves?' Jane asked.

'I guess he gave them to his master!' Mr Berger said with a wink.

'Ponce fell ill in Puerto Rico, and he heard there was a spring which made old people young in one of the islands to the north, so he tried to find it. Well, he didn't, but he *did* discover Florida. Ever seen a bottle of Florida Water? Oh, it's great stuff—clear and sparkling, and smells of orange blossom! Well, look out for the trade mark when you do. It's a fountain, and that's *the* magic fountain of eternal youth that Ponce never found.'

At last, dizzy with fortresses, plazas, and patios, fountains and white marble statuary, they were on their way out to the suburbs. As they drove away from the city centre, the narrow paved streets suddenly broadened into highways.

'San Juan's really two cities, the old and the new. We're in the new now.'

Puerto Rico's really two places, too, Puffer thought.

Jane noticed how American the clothes displayed in the shop windows were, and that nearly everyone on the pavements (the 'sidewalks' as Mr Berger called them) chewed gum.

Mrs Berger was on her veranda to meet them. She looked.

very cool in a smart, polka-dotted blue dress. She was much younger than her husband, and her red hair was cut very short and youthfully. Her nails were a bright pink. Even her glasses were gay and young, with butterfly curls to their transparent green plastic rims, and earrings to match them.

'I sure am glad to see you', she greeted them. 'We don't see enough strangers here. We Americans visit with each other too much, and leave it at that!'

She led them inside to a cool, shady room with curtains of bright green with a design of enormous pink roses, and a great many cushions of pink and green too on the wicker-work sofas and chairs. The windows were covered with mosquito screens, and the furniture was low and comfortable and cool. A glass coffee table, on chromium legs, stood to one side, with a pretty set of cups and saucers also in pink and green, and there were photographs of two boys on the ivory-white piano.

'That's Leroy and Hiram', she said. 'They're home in the States now.'

Leroy and Hiram, who were about 15 and 13, David judged, both wore horn-rimmed glasses, and jeans. Their hair was cropped short in crew-cuts. They looked very jolly, freckled, snub-nosed boys, and the Fulfords were sorry not to be able to meet them.

'Oh, well', Mrs Berger explained, lighting a cigarette and offering the box round, 'the schools here aren't good enough! My mother said to me. "Bertha Berger", she said, "just you send those boys right back home to me, and I'll see they get the right American background". So I did, and now they go to the school their father did.'

'You *must* miss them!' Jane said, thinking how much she missed her own mother, even though she would soon see her again.

'I sure do, sugar', Mrs Berger said. 'But your colonials, they've got the same problem, haven't they?'

'Yes,' Puffer said, 'but the climate in our colonies is often so atrocious for children that it makes it easier to decide to send them away. You've got a wonderful climate here!'

'Yeah, I suppose so', Mrs Berger said, but she looked so unenthusiastic that David asked, 'Don't you like it here, Mrs Berger?'

'Why, it's so isolated!' she cried. 'It's true I've got a lot of servants, but they're just so *bad*! Lazy and incompetent—they never do things twice the same way! And it's a narrow life, just tea parties and card parties every day; either you're giving one or you're going to one!'

'And will you ever go back to the States to live?' Puffer asked his host, who hadn't said anything while his wife was talking, but had been handing round Manhattan cocktails and soft drinks.

'I guess not', Mr Berger said, 'I don't find things here so unpleasant as Bertha does, but if I did I couldn't afford to change, not at my time of life!'

'Well, you men have a more interesting life', his wife protested. 'You're always having luncheons with interesting people down-town, tourists and visitors to the island, and all, and then you've got your Rotary and Kiwanis clubs!'

'Oh, have you got those out here?' Puffer asked, very interested. 'I've heard about American men's clubs, the Elks and all that!'

'Sure thing!' Mr Berger exclaimed boyishly. 'There's a whole heap of noonday "Service Clubs" in Puerto Rico! We sing the same songs as we do back in the States, and we have the same ceremonials. The Puerto Ricans can join in, too, and it's a real good thing. I only wish the wives would do the same. Why don't you, honey?'

'Oh, Omar, we work very hard for the Puerto Ricans!' Bertha replied. 'Why, look at all I did for that charity ball for the American Red Cross!'

'You women work when there's a hurricane or an earthquake or an epidemic on!' her husband said. 'But it would do more real good if you sometimes made some close friends among the Puerto Rican women—and the Spanish women too—when nothing special was happening. You wouldn't feel so doggone blue, either!'

'*Nobody* makes friends with the Spaniards—' Mrs Berger was saying, when she was interrupted by a dark, shy boy, who came in to announce in a soft, fluid voice that lunch was ready.

The table, drawn close to a window, was tiled, and they sat down to a highly interesting salad. Puffer recognized lettuce and chicory, nuts and raisins, sweet corn from a tin, cheese, sliced yellow peppers, and ham which Mrs Berger said her mother had sent her from the States. They might as well have been in America, David thought.

Then they had a chocolate ice from Mrs Berger's refrigerator. They left the table to drink coffee blended by a famous American firm.

'Ah, that reminds me!' Mr Berger said, offering Puffer his choice of a cigarette or a cigar, 'You must see over a cigar factory after lunch!'

'I've seen over one in Havana!' Puffer said indiscreetly.

'Then you haven't seen anything yet', Mr Berger said emphatically.

'Tell me', Puffer said, 'Just before lunch you and your wife referred to Puerto Ricans and Spaniards in Puerto Rico as if they were quite different people. What exactly did you mean?'

'That's just what they *are*! Different people!'

'Well, I did know there was a small pure-blooded Spanish colony here. But surely they think and speak of themselves as Puerto Ricans? After all, they've lived here for generations!'

'Some Americans have lived here for generations, too', Mr Berger said, 'if not so many of them, but they still speak of themselves as Americans. A Puerto Rican chap, call him Diaz—he'll speak of his neighbour, José, as a Spaniard.

Press him, he'll explain "José's Puerto Rican born, maybe, but his blood's Spanish". Now José's an American citizen as well—and so is Diaz. So it's all a bit confusing!

'How many are there in the Spanish group?'

'Just a few thousand, a handful. But they keep themselves to themselves. They do plenty to help the Puerto Ricans. For one thing, they founded the Casa de España, the Spanish House, at great expense—a sort of community centre, library, art collection, and so on all rolled into one—and gave it to the people. They wanted to strengthen the bonds between them and the Puerto Ricans, they said, and to encourage art and literature and so on but it all stemmed from Spain, all the art and the literature and the sculpture was in the Spanish tradition, and King Alfonso was the first president. Some like it; some say it's a bad thing! The Spaniards have never got over Puerto Rico being conquered by America, and they never forgive us for it! They own a lot of newspapers, and they let us have it, hot and strong, all the time! We can't come back at them, so they have it all their own way.'

David had picked up a copy of *El Mundo* from a table and was glancing at it.

'Can you read Spanish?' he asked Mrs Berger rather shyly. He wanted to use the opportunity to exchange notes about difficulties.

'Oh, no!' she said. 'Omar can, but I can't. I can pick out the headlines, and I get along fine with the shopkeepers. I read the English pages in the papers, but otherwise I just wait for the newspapers my mother sends out. There isn't a single paper published here in English, would you believe it? It's very hard on us!'

* * *

The cigar factory was known as The American Tobacco Company. It was immense.

'There's a colossal output from this one here—hundreds of thousands of cigars made every day, and they all go straight

to Uncle Sam. That hand-made stuff in Havana is small-time, it takes too long. Got the girls here operating machines.'

'I suppose your cigars are expensive', Puffer asked, 'with all this machinery? Labour's cheap here, isn't it, and machinery's dear?'

'Do you know, we turn out our cigars at a fraction of the cost they do theirs in Havana?' the manager said. 'Here, help yourself, and give us your honest opinion as to which one's the better smoke!'

But Puffer was not going to be tempted into giving an opinion on the rival merits of Puerto Rico and Havana—or Jamaican—cigars. He was far too wily.

He put his cigar in his breast pocket.

'I'll smoke it later on', he said. 'I like to smoke in the cool of the evening.'

* * *

The adobe house in the hills with the palm-thatched roof was tiny. There was only one window—a gaping hole, with neither frame nor panes to it.

The Fulfords had persuaded Mr Berger to introduce them to a *jibaro*, or peasant, family at home. They had driven out some fifteen miles from the city.

Five children tumbled outside, pale and straight-haired, barefoot, and poorly dressed, but clean. Some stoned^d mangoes from a tree, some hauled at a half-starved white goat tethered to the door, and the baby—wearing nothing, since his newly-washed shirt was drying on the hibiscus hedge in full bloom—mothered a miauling cat.

Mr Berger pushed open the rickety gate set in the 'fence'—a single strand of barbed wire enclosing hut and yard. He approached the eldest boy, who wore a pair of blue jeans, the straps buttoned over bare skin.

'What's your name?' Mr Berger asked, in his heavily accented Spanish.

'Pedro, señor. Pedro García.'

'And how old are you, Pedro?'

'Fifteen—I think—Señor.'

Inside the hut the children's mother, also barefoot, was sitting on a wooden chair, working at something on her lap. In the bare dark room the patch of fine needlework struck an unexpected note of beauty. The embroidery was delicate, the white linen spotless. Señora García had taken the trouble to spread a piece of paper on her lap under her work to protect it. She rose hurriedly, wrapping it in the paper, as Mr Berger loomed before her.

'*Buon' dias*, Señora García', Mr Berger said, meticulously formal, as the Spanish-speaking peoples are, however poor they may be.

Señora García babbled something breathlessly in Spanish, her hands at her throat. She was frightened—afraid that something had happened to her husband.

Mr Berger put her mind quickly at rest.

'I come only to ask for a drink of water', he said, 'and to introduce you to my foreign friends.'

Señora García gave him a drink from a pottery vessel in a corner. It was very cool. Water had to be brought from the stream 300 yards away. Mr Berger questioned her, asking what Puffer wanted to know, and translating for him.

Her husband set off at five every morning, she said, on a very light breakfast—just coffee without milk, not even bread. He had to walk six miles to reach the sugar *central* where he worked. He didn't get home again till seven at night—after another six-mile walk,—and for supper he usually had only some boiled green bananas and more milkless coffee.

'Still, he *is* working', Mr Berger said. 'Too many *jibaros* aren't.'

'But surely with your gigantic sugar-crop, there should be work for all?' Puffer asked. 'Doesn't Puerto Rico produce more sugar than all the British, French, and Dutch territories in the Caribbean combined?'

'There's a whole heap of sugar *centrals* in Puerto Rico', Mr Berger said, 'but then, there's a whole lot of *jibaros* too!'

'Can't they grow even more sugar and employ all the *jibaros*? Puerto Rico is a very big place! Can't they cultivate more of it?'

'It's big, but a lot of it is mountain. They *can* only cultivate half the land. That won't employ all the *jibaros*, any way you work it.'

'If the father gets so little, what do these children and their mother eat?' Puffer asked.

Mr Berger spoke to Señora García. She led them across to the red-brick stove which stood like an altar at one end of the one-roomed hut. They had to pass two large beds with tasselled coverlets to reach it. With a table and several chairs, that was nearly all that this poor house contained.

Señora García took up an iron ladle and smilingly stirred the large black pot on her stove. She heaped rice on a large yellow-patterned dish while they watched, and then poured on some red beans which had been simmering in another pot, and soaked them both with a red sauce she had already made in a little cracked blue jug. Then she shook a few drops of olive oil over the mixture, and stirred again with her large spoon. She called out to her children, and all five of them came running in to settle round the table like a swarm of bees, happily shouting and laughing.

There was no cloth. Señora García simply put spoonfuls of her rice-and-beans on five tin plates, and clanked down a handful of tin spoons. The children fell to hungrily.

Puffer tasted Señora García's cooking.

'And that's lunch!' Mr Berger said. 'Main meal of the day. If they're in funds they may have a small piece of salted codfish to boil with the rice. Papa has the codfish and Mama and the *ninos* have the smell!'

'It's not much', Puffer said. 'Not a scrap of meat!'

'No, but there's beans—that's good protein. And the rice is filling. Olive oil is good. It's "Spanish butter".'

'Not much in the way of vitamins, though!'

'That red sauce dyeing the rice pink is made from annatto. The *jibaros* use it because it is pretty. But it happens to be bang-full of vitamins—better than codliver oil; *and* it doesn't taste so bad. No, as a meal it's not as bad as it looks, even if it isn't good.' He added, after a moment, 'Still, this family'd be a lot better off if it came in for the free meals system. These children are among the unlucky ones so far. They're too far out to get to the nearest school where meals are served out. I'm afraid an awful lot of children just never get to school at all in Puerto Rico. There just aren't places for them. They haven't finished building all the schools yet. It takes time and money. They're building first where they can serve the maximum number of children. Hey, Pedro! do *you* go to school?'

Pedro shook his head. 'No, señor. Never. I work for my family, though, sometimes. I earn wages! And my sister, too!'

'When the Americans took over', Mr Berger explained, 'there wasn't a single free school in the country districts. Thirty years later there were over two thousand—and a university had been founded.'

'And *still* Pedro's brothers and sisters don't go to school?'

'There are so *many* children!' Mr Berger said. 'We did so much for the Puerto Ricans in the short time after we took over, stamping out hookworm, malaria, and tuberculosis, that the population has increased by leaps and bounds. And they always have large families.'

Señora García seemed to have picked up the gist of what they were saying.

'*Vivimos como cuatro en un zapato!*' she said, and Mr Berger translated.

'She says "We live four in one shoe"—it's a local saying. Certainly they sleep at least four in a bed!'

'I wish it wasn't holiday time', Mr Berger said, 'I'd have liked to show you one of these schools in action. There's one not far away called the *Rafael Cordero* School. It's what we call a second-unit school—they teach practical things, the boys learn how to farm properly and they do homework on their own land. The teachers give part-time classes to the parents, too. Then there's the School of the Air.'

'What's that? Wireless?'

'Yes, radio programmes, like your B.B.C. Schools programmes, only the government runs them here and they go direct to these rural classrooms. But all the country schools are overcrowded! They have to work them in shifts.'

'Well, I must say', Puffer said, 'You have tried! It's a bit hard that, after *all* that, half the people in Puerto Rico can't read or write! And that the problem's such a big one only because you've looked after them so well!'

They bade farewell to Pedro and his mother and his brothers and sisters.

Before Puffer left he bought the piece of embroidery Señora García had been working on. There was one flower left unfinished and Señora García did not want to part with it like that. But Puffer would not go without it.

'It'll remind me that no-one can do everything at once', he said.

'Oh, we Americans in Puerto Rico get very much criticized', Mr Berger said, taking his meaning. 'I always say that our critics are indignant because we've only done *nearly* everything for the Puerto Ricans instead of everything!'

CHAPTER VI

OLD FRANCE IN THE NEW WORLD

'I SUPPOSE that this could be described as the scene of one of the greatest disasters of all time', Puffer said. 'I shall describe it as that, anyway, in my article!'

They were standing in the ruins of St Pierre, the old capital of the steeply mountainous island of Martinique, which had been utterly destroyed by the eruption of the volcano, Mont Pelé, on 8 May, 1902. It was not easy to imagine the rich old sea port. There was little left but a fine large bay with a rough shoreline and a mountain behind it. The new buildings—a garage, a poor hotel, and a covered market—were dotted here and there. (The *musée volcanologique*, with its macabre skulls and bones blackened by the eruption, its pathetic children's toys and scraps of dresses, made them shudder, and they went out almost at once.)

Puffer described how the whole side of the mountain had seemed to gape wide open, and how a 'whirlwind of fire', as one onlooker had described it, had belched out to engulf the town in a matter of minutes. It had swept over it like a river in a fiery mass, 'and, thrusting the very waters of the sea before it, set the ships ablaze', burning every ship in the great harbour bar one.

'The whole population was wiped out', Puffer said, 'except for one man. He was a murderer, a man called Syparis, who was in an underground dungeon, in the condemned cell of the prison. The walls were so thick that the lava which flowed everywhere else couldn't reach him.'

They gazed, fascinated but saddened, at the cell where Syparis had waited alone for death. Or perhaps, they thought, he merely wondered what was going on, and why there was so much noise so suddenly.

Jane said, 'Wasn't there any warning at all?'

'Yes, there was. That's the pathetic thing. For days beforehand there'd been little outbursts—showers of ash, and things like that. The Governor decided they didn't matter, and begged everyone to be calm, and not to panic. It grew worse and worse, and they stayed on and on until it was too late—they had all been brave for nothing.'

'How horrible', said Jane.

'The whole thing was quite heartbreaking', Puffer said, and he told them how much Martinique had lost with her gay and beautiful capital city. Everything the people of the island had prized most had been gathered together there—fine public and private buildings, good pictures and sculpture and silver. 'To say nothing of forty thousand people buried alive by molten lava or asphyxiated by gases. Many of the old families of Martinique lost nearly all their members in a few minutes—some of them were wiped out completely.'

'Aunt Grace told me that Grandfather said the volcanic ash covered the roof-tops as far away as Jamaica', Jane remembered. 'He often spoke of it to her before he died.'

'The little city had been reconstructed on the ruins—but half-heartedly. Where there had been elegant eighteenth-century buildings, a fine theatre, and graceful streets, there were, as they saw, the ordinary houses of an ordinary little town scattered here and there. Outcrops of lava and layers of ashes spoke ominously of the volcanic presence still hovering over them, and there were shattered walls overgrown by creepers, fallen masonry, and great heaps of rubble everywhere inside the town. The ancient streets were still several feet higher than they had been, with ashes. Old windowsills were now level with the roads. Trees had grown up again, but under their concealing branches there were often the remains of old, charred buildings. Puffer pointed silently to the old steps that had once led into the opera house's foyer. 'The trim little houses looked like mushrooms.

'But—' David said, 'but why did they rebuild *here*? Mightn't the volcano erupt again?'

'It's an extraordinary thing', Puffer said, 'but people always do, you know. Yet the people of Martinique should have learned to be cautious. In three hundred-odd years they've had to put up with thirty-three hurricanes, seven earthquakes, three volcanic eruptions, and eleven storms with tidal waves!'

* * *

They had stopped at St Pierre on their way to visit M. and Madame Quincaillier, who lived in the hills. They got back into the old car Puffer had hired, and drove on towards Mount Parnassus. It was the sort of drive they had got used to in the West Indies—or, rather would never get used to—shooting carelessly round hairpin bends, honking insanely; or driving at full speed under clumps of bamboo and giant ferns which met over their heads, shutting out the light.

At long last they reached their destination.

Monsieur and Madame Quincaillier were on their veranda to welcome their guests, and so were their nine children. They were all waving handkerchiefs and shouting animatedly long before the Fulfords were out of the car.

M. Quincaillier was small and gay, with a sensitive face under a shock of strong white hair. His moustache was bristling and made him seem fierce, but he himself was the very opposite.

'Welcome!' he was shouting. 'You are most welcome! Come in and meet my family!'

His house was a pleasant old colonial building, rambling and casually built, surrounded by wide verandas. It looked noble from the outside, though the effect was rather spoiled by the ramshackle erection nearby which was the sugar-factory.

Madame Quincaillier—Arlette to her husband—was taller than he was, and delicately French, with many expressive gestures. She led David and Jane inside to freshen themselves, up, leaving her husband to look after Puffer. All the family,

ranging from six months to eighteen years old, remained on the veranda.

The drawing-room was large, at least forty feet long, and nobly proportioned. But it was furnished with unbelievably ugly furniture—old horse-hair sofas, hard and unyielding-looking chairs of great crudity, and, amazingly, a couple of green-painted iron garden benches!

Somehow neither Jane nor David disliked it. It was obviously not lack of taste which was responsible, but casualness of outlook.

In the bedroom in which Jane washed she found a huge four-poster bed dripping a powdery substance—the result of the gnawings of white ants. A Negro girl brought her a rusty watering-can full of cold water, and poured it into the old-fashioned china basin on a stand. There was no running water in the house, and she could see the only 'bathroom' through the window, a derelict hut with its door half-off its hinges.

Jane wondered what the Quincailliers did for lighting. Her unspoken question was answered at once. A kerosene lamp stood by the bed, its wick turned low, and on a nail over the bathroom door was suspended a storm lantern.

Outside, Jane and David found M. Quincaillier explaining to Puffer why his house faced north.

'It ees the same wiz us all—all the beeg houses in Martinique, that is', he said. '*Nous avons grand peur des cyclones!* We are afraid of hurricanes!'

Madame Quincaillier shrugged her shoulders eloquently, and added that that was also the reason for the horrible corrugated iron roofs on the houses. In the old days they had been tiled.

'And now,' Monsieur Quincaillier said surprisingly, 'we will all go for a *pique-nique!*'

Apparently, Puffer discovered, people in Martinique spent a great deal of their time at picnics. They had done so for hundreds of years despite the fact that Martinique is a rainy island.

The picnic which the Fulfords attended was no simple affair of sitting on the grass round a square of tablecloth and chewing sandwiches.

The family and their guests rattled off in three cars, with six servants in a truck to bring up the rear. Hampers of food and drink travelled with the servants, and so, it turned out, subsequently, did three or four tables, and some great blocks of ice in sawdust and sacking.

When they all reached a spot which the Quincailliers considered suitable—and this took some considerable amount of French argument to settle—they strolled in the woods while the Negro servants set up the tables close together, spread them with a large starched linen tablecloth, and decorated them with bowls of scarlet flowers. Then they brought out the food and many bottles, the cutlery and silver, and set them out, with shouting and laughter.

The sea-food of Martinique is famous the world over, and it was obvious that the Quincailliers were determined to give Puffer a chance of sampling every possible variety of it. He wished he had a greater capacity than he could boast of, as he ate and ate.

Delicious stuffed crabs, spiced shrimps, succulent lobsters followed one another, and led up to 'sea-eggs'—white sea-urchins baked hard, with the roes taken out, fried, and replaced. Jane hadn't really liked to eat hers, but when she did she found it very good indeed.

There were blood sausages too, after the sea-food, and that was only a preliminary to roast sucking pig, kept hot by some unknown means.

Then, strangely, came three or four gargantuan platters of cold macaroni. But no Fulford could do anything to help with these. Monsieur Quincaillier, presiding at the head of the table with a great carving knife and fork, did not press the macaroni on them, but he would not hear of their refusing the *chou-coco*.



1 West Indian sugar estate worker cuts down stalks of cane with his sharp machete. Sugar is still cut by hand



ABOVE. *Looking across a sugar-cane field to the northern coast of Barbados.*
BELOW. *Inter-island schooners give the little harbour an old-world air.*



'What is it?' Puffer asked weakly, and in a spate of French M. Quincaillier told him it was the heart of a young coconut tree, a *salade*, his host said, of the first order.

All the time Monsieur was pressing huge beakers of drink on his family and guests. It was *ti punch*, the local punch, mixed by Monsieur himself, from white rum, and sugar and syrup, with lime and lemon and nutmeg in it. Everyone was drinking it in great quantities, as if it were of no importance, but to Puffer it seemed pretty strong.

'What a fine big family you have!' Puffer said to Madame Quincaillier.

'Beeg? Oh, no!' Madame replied sadly. 'We cannot afford beeg families any more in Martinique. It is only *une famille nombreuse*, mine, only nine. My mother had thirteen, that was a good family. 'Today mos' people have so few, so few—just five or seex!'

'We need to have big families!' Hyacinth, the eldest boy said. 'It is necessary that we all marry our cousins in Martinique. There are so few of the white families, the Creoles, that it is of necessity, that. We do not intermarry with the rest of the people of Martinique, and so we are all related to each other!'

'Yes, we have no such thing as a mother-in-law in this island!' his father said. 'She is always somebody's aunt as well! My mother-in-law is my Tante Nen-Nen.'

The talk veered to St Pierre. The aristocratic families of Martinique could never speak for five minutes without recalling that disaster, Puffer had heard.

'*Mon père*, he lef' school on the Friday', M. Quincaillier said. 'On Monday there was not one of his friends in the classroom. They were all dead.' The tears stood suddenly in his blue eyes as if the tragedy were fresh.

Madame gestured to a middle-aged Negro woman waiting with folded arms behind her chair.

'Hédonie!' she called.

Hédonie must have been beautiful when she was young. Her costume was amazing: the eighteenth-century garb in the islands which the old women still wore on Martinique, though the young ones preferred shapeless cotton frocks.

She wore a light bodice, the elbow-length sleeves falling into a cataract of frilly pleats. Round her plump, erect shoulders was a silk scarf pinned on the breast with a large brooch. Her skirt was caught up on one side over several petticoats, some of them of lace, and fell in rich folds. She wore a great deal of gold jewellery—three thick chains with gold tassels and a collar of large golden balls. She had gold bracelets round her wrists too, and large globe-like earrings covering the lobes of her ears. Her turban was tight and stiff and made of silk, tilted forward over her forehead, with two ends meeting in front in stiff spikes.

Hédonie's bearing was magnificent; she walked like a queen towards her mistress, and bent over her to hear what she had to say.

'We brought our album to show you', Madame said, as Hédonie laid a large faded book with brass clasps before her on the cloth, after carefully brushing some crumbs away and removing a wineglass from before her. 'We knew you would be interested in these pictures.'

Puffer moved to the chair beside Madame, and watched her turn the pages with her beautiful fingers, as if she were touching something infinitely precious.

The photographs were faded to a pale yellow. Puffer could just make out the figures in some of them. A great many had been taken at picnics, and he could make out the straw boaters of the men, the large hats of the women, and the bottles of wine, the tables laden with food and the Negroes in attendance—the picnics of old, not so very different from the present ones.

A leaf fell from the mango tree over their heads, and Madame brushed it away hastily.

She showed Puffer face after face of people who had died in the volcano's eruption. She showed him a photograph of the eruption itself—an ugly cauliflower of smoke and fire which reminded him of the atomic mushroom of Hiroshima.

He mentioned that thought. No-one replied. It was clear that the atomic explosion meant less to the Quincailliers than the volcanic explosion of fifty years before.

'Now, we will take our picture!' Monsieur exclaimed. '*Nous avons bus, nous avons mangés*, we have eaten and drunk, and we are all happy!'

So they posed, all smiling, for a picture which would find its way into the family album, and one day be as yellowed as the others.

It was while they were in the midst of the taking of the photograph that there was an ear-splitting scream from Hédonie, who had been smiling broadly and giggling comfortably a moment before.

She was babbling something, a hand to her mouth, the other pointing to a branch of the mango tree above Madame's head.

M. Quincaillier dropped his camera and leapt for a stick.

'*Vite! Vite!*' he cried, '*Un fer de lance!*'

Hyacinth reached it first—the snake curled round the branch, which no-one had noticed before. In a moment it lay dead at their feet, a horrible reptile called the *trigonocephale* or *fer de lance* snake.

'In a moment it would have shot through the air at Madame!' M. Quincaillier said emotionally, embracing his Arlette, 'and she would have died. There is no doubt, no doubt at all!'

Sometimes the snakes lay hidden in the long grass, he said, and there were many of them in Martinique, though not so many as there had once been. Mongooses had been imported, and had reduced their numbers, then, as in Jamaica, had become a pest themselves.

'It is hard to understand', Madame, who had remained calm throughout the scene, said, 'why we have thees snakes here! There are none in the islands round about!'

'They have come from Venezuela, *chérie*', her husband said. 'There are many there! They floated down on timber, and then were washed up on Martinique, I am sure of it!'

When the excitement had died down a little Puffer tried to return to business. He could not write articles only on picnics and snakes in Martinique!

Gazing across at the slopes covered with the fresh green of sugar cane, he said:

'Don't you grow anything but sugar cane in Martinique?'

'Some people grow bananas', M. Quincaillier replied, shrugging his shoulders expressively, 'but it is too risky! Parasites—too much rain—too much wind, it is all a chance, and *mal pour les nerfs*, bad for the nerves!'

'They have all those things to consider in Jamaica, too', Puffer suggested gently.

'Yes, it is so. But we have other troubles of our own as well. One has to fertilize the plants, and fertilizer is expensive for us. One has to find space on ships with refrigerators—and that is dear, too, for us. One has to book one's space in advance, and even if one's trees are blown down, one must pay for it!'

'That seems a bit hard', Puffer said, 'but I suppose it's fair enough from the point of view of the shipping companies.'

'Understood', said M. Quincaillier. 'One grows one's trees, one fertilizes them, one conquers the parasites, one does not have too much rain or too much wind, one books one's shipping space and puts one's bananas in it and sends them off to Paris. Good! But one's troubles are even yet not over!'

'What could possibly happen at that stage?' Puffer enquired.

'*Alors!*' and M. Quincaillier shook an emphatic forefinger under Puffer's nose, 'then a lot of Spanish oranges arrive in Paris at the same time! They go into the shops, the oranges are sold and the bananas are left!'

No, it was far too chancy a business for him, Monsieur Quincaillier had decided. The banana grower never knew what he would get for his fruit.

'If we get a hundred francs for a kilo in France it is good! But we might only get fifty francs! Then all our trouble has gone for nothing!'

Puffer could well see that it was *mal pour les nerfs*. Obviously most people in Martinique thought like his host. You could walk across the whole island in any direction and never lose sight of growing cane. Every one of the fine old houses was surrounded by canefields in which busy Negroes worked with their cutlasses. But the same was not true of banana plantations.

Soon Puffer was talking figures with his friend. Jane felt very sleepy, but she made a great effort to stay awake and understand what was being said.

'There is no future in sugar', M. Quincaillier was saying. 'It is easy. It gives no trouble. But one sends it only to France, and everything else goes only to France, too. Everything you understand, to France, and nowhere else. We in the island receive about four million pounds a year from sugar and bananas.'

'Well, that sounds a nice round sum of money!'

'It sounds it, yes, agreed, Monsieur! But we also have to get everything (but *everything* that is not sugar, or rum, or bananas) from outside! That is, flour, wood, clothes, nails—everything! And one has to pay for all that.'

He added gloomily, 'The island does not even make bottles in which to put its rum! It must buy even those.'

'Imports exceed exports', Puffer said, 'in fact.'

'*Bien sûr*. By seven million pounds every year!'

'And you can't grow anything else?'

'One has tried, Monsieur, one has tried. In three hundred years do you not think that one has tried?' And M. Quincaillier threw out his arms expressively.

'The French people are not lazy', Madame added, 'they are very hardworking! We are full of energy and of virtue, and of industry!'

'We have grown annatto', her husband resumed. 'We have grown tobacco. We have grown cocoa. We have grown coffee. And we have grown cotton. We have lost fortunes, and had to start once more. Always there was something to spoil it all. Always we have come back to sugar!'

'Humph!' Puffer said. 'And you say you can't export your sugar anywhere but to France?'

'Where?' M. Quincaillier demanded dramatically. 'Tell me where, *mon ami*? America looks after Cuba and helps Puerto Rico! Your Great Britain looks after Jamaica and Trinidad! We have only France.'

'All this cannot interest you, my dear', Madame Quincaillier said to Jane. 'Let us talk of something more amusing! Did you know that the Empress Josephine of France, Napoleon's beloved Josephine, was born in Martinique?'

Madame began to tell Jane and her children a local legend.

'One day Josephine was walking with her favourite cousin Aimée du Buc de Rivry. The two girls met an old woman, a sort of prophetess, sitting under a tree. The old woman offered to tell their fortunes, and, gazing at their palms, said to Josephine, 'You will be an empress'.

Then she had looked at Aimée's, and said, 'You will be more than an empress.'

She had refused to answer any more questions.

'I know Josephine Beauharnais became Empress of France', David said, for he, too, had given up listening to the men, enticed away by Madame's romantic story, 'but I've never heard of the other one, Aimée Whatshername!'

'Ah!' Madame said, '*Attention!* Soon after, Aimée was sent

to a French convent—it was the custom for young girls of high station, and she was the daughter of a rich nobleman who had large estates. All went well until the return voyage. A storm blew her brigantine off its course, and they were attacked and seized by pirates in the Mediterranean. The pirates gave the ship to the Bey of Tunis. He sold the passengers as slaves, but sent Aimée as a gift to the Grand Turk in Stamboul.’

‘I don’t think I should like that much’, Jane cried.

‘Oh, it was not so very dreadful, my dear’, Madame said, with a very practical air. ‘She became the favourite wife of the Sultan, and bore him a son, Mahmoud II.’

‘I suppose a sultana is more than an empress’, David said, doubtfully.

‘That’s what the old woman said’, Madame Quincaillier said. ‘They say Aimée’s influence turned the course of history later on, for she was always friendly to the West. Perhaps that’s what the prophetess meant. But, of course, no one really knows for certain!’

Josephine’s home, La Pagerie, was a ruin, but had been recently bought, and was being lovingly cared for.

‘Josephine came back to Martinique once’, Madame said. ‘She was glad to get back to the heat. She could never tolerate the cold of Europe, they say, and always kept the rooms of her palace at Malmaison as warm as it is in Martinique!’

‘Was it not strange’, Hyacinth added dreamily, ‘that those two girls out walking that day should have both become empresses?’

‘Empresses and the mothers of kings and queens’, his mother pursued. ‘For Josephine’s daughter, Hortense (by her first marriage) became the Queen of Holland, and Aimée’s son was the Emperor Mahmoud II. Never forget, Jane and David, that anything can happen to anyone! You may one day be a king and a queen yourselves!’

‘I don’t think so, somehow’, David said matter-of-factly.

'Neither do I!' Jane said.

'In that case', Madame said, 'you will not be! You must believe it can happen if it is to happen!'

* * *

They returned at dusk over the miserable roads of Martinique. Jane, sitting in the front seat of the front car, shut her eyes, remembering the hairpin bends, and noticing that the driver never took his foot from the accelerator.

At every cross-roads there was a light for the Virgin on a tree-trunk. At each light there was a little rustling as all the Quincailliers crossed themselves devoutly. The driver of her car, Jane observed, did so too, removing his hand from the wheel in order to do so.

'Did you know, David', Puffer was saying, in the back seat with his host and hostess in the second car, talking to David in the front, 'that there was once a question of choosing between Canada and Martinique, and that France chose Martinique?'

'Why on earth?'

'Every good reason. In 1763, when the question of choosing between Canada and the Windward Islands arose, Canada was only an arid waste. The Windwards had Martinique, however, and Martinique was a rich and fertile sugar island. The Duc de Choiseul had little difficulty in making up his mind!'

'We do not change', M. Quincaillier said. 'The world changes but we do not. We are always the same, more like old France than France herself.'

He reminded Puffer that *Les Grands Seigneurs de Martinique*, the little cross-section of French nobility who had lived on the island, had never known the French Revolution.

'We are what the French aristocracy would be today if it had not been for that—that horrible business! The proudest aristocracies in the world live in the West Indies!'

The two thousand *behes* (the not-too-polite local name for the whites) lived on Martinique among 290,000 Negroes and

mulattoes. They owned four-fifths of the land, nearly all the rum, all the sugar, and all the biggest businesses but had no hand in governing the island.

'I don't know whether they're a good thing or a bad thing,' Puffer thought sleepily, 'whether they're stupidly backward or wonderfully philosophic, whether they're too proud or too exclusive. But I do know they're extremely charming, and I'm very glad I met them.'

Then he and M. Quincaillier both fell asleep, their snores resounding through the balmy air of Martinique in a sort of Caribbean *entente cordiale*.

* * *

The Quincailliers had arranged another Martinician treat for the Fulfords the next day.

Late at night they were to go lobster fishing. So during the day they drove down to the seashore, ate and drank in the open air once more, slept, and bathed in the sea in the intervals.

The moon was rising in the sky as they sailed out into the bay which had been chosen for the expedition.

The water was shallow, and glittering with phosphorescence. They had sailed some distance before they caught up with the Negroes who had waded out before them, and yet they were only knee-deep.

One of the Negroes held up a torch.

'That's a *serbie*', Hyacinth explained to David. 'It's a cylinder, and it holds a chemical that burns very brightly. The lobsters are attracted by the light, and they come out of the weeds down below to it. Come and try and see if you can catch one!'

He pressed a long forked stick in David's hand, and seizing one himself from a bundle in the stern of their boat he rolled up his trousers and leaped out into the water.

Puffer and Monsieur Quincaillier were already in the water and David was only a moment after Hyacinth, for he had arrived wearing bathing drawers. This was apparently a men's sport—the girls stayed on board.

The Negro with the torch held it continuously aloft. The others peered through the water.

The Negroes walked amazingly quietly, and David and Hyacinth and the two men did their best to imitate them. They hardly disturbed the water at all as they moved, pushing it gently and slowly aside with the weight of their legs. Their whispers sounded strange in the silent night, above the gentle lapping of the waves against the boat.

'*Ah! Voilà!*' a Negro whispered, tensely, and '*Vite! Vite!*' Hyacinth clutched David and pointed, to give him first chance. He showed him what to do. David stared hard through the clear water. He could see the lobster, looking astonishingly eerie. He brought his forked stick down and held it a prisoner. He was a captive!

A Negro was by him in an instant. He ducked down, to seize the lobster by its middle, and came up with it. It was flailing about, thrashing its tail and its legs like a miniature dragon. Water splashed everywhere, and David was astounded at the amount of power there seemed to be in that small fan-shaped tail. In a moment, however, the lobster was in the boat, high and dry and helpless. The sounds of its clawings came to them, mingling with the whisperings and the lappings.

Jane was in the boat, watching the black beady eyes of the victim lit up by the torchlight, now looking quite amazingly evil, now pathetic, as if they begged for mercy. Jane would far rather have caught the lobsters than sat in the boat. But what would you? Martinique was an old-fashioned island with old-fashioned ways! It had simply not occurred to anyone that she could take part in the lobster fishing, and she rather thought that if she suggested it the effect would be something like that of the eruption of Mont Pelé!

'Just when I was getting used to being a girl, too', Jane thought. 'I certainly couldn't *tolerate* being a girl in Havana or Martinique—not for one minute!'

CHAPTER VII

'LITTLE ENGLAND'—BARBADOS

MR FISHER-COOKE was a very old gentleman, tall, bent, and with drooping, tobacco-stained white moustaches. He wore a Panama hat, and a monocle with a watered silk ribbon, and carried a malacca cane. His clothes were of a rather old-fashioned cut, tailored in London of light tweed, and there was a fine watch-chain with a seal dangling from it slung across his waistcoat. Like Barbados itself, he was a survival from England's past. He even took snuff.

Mr Fisher-Cooke was a widower. He lived alone in a beautiful porticoed house set in spacious gardens outside Bridgetown, the capital and only city of the island of Barbados. His ancestors had built the house two hundred years before, and his family had lived in it ever since.

'England is very close to my heart', he said in the slow Barbadian voice, once described as 'yawny drawly' by the nephew of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the poet. 'I was educated at Eton like my father before me, and his father before him, and I spend a summer at home whenever I can, looking up old friends. But ah'm a true-born Barbadian just the same!'

He had welcomed Puffer and his family to a Barbadian 'breakfast' that morning, a very substantial meal of chops, fried potatoes, vegetables, and cold fried plum duff. They had just left the splendid dining-room hung with oil paintings of Fisher-Cookes, full of excellently copied Sheraton furniture, and gleaming with silver and plate, and were sitting under a spreading *lignum-vitae* tree in the garden.

'Where does the name Barbados come from?' Jane asked.

'You're becoming quite a little pedagogue!' Puffer said. 'As a matter of fact, I'm rather interested myself.'

'Some people say it's to do with the banyan tree', Mr Fisher-Cooke said, lighting his second cigar. 'That's a

bearded fig, and *barbados* means bearded in Spanish. Others think there may have been a race of bearded Caribs who lived here, and gave the island their name.'

'But I always understood that the island was found uninhabited!' Puffer said.

'True. Besides, the Caribs were never bearded.'

'I should have thought', Jane said, 'that if you were going to call the island after a tree it would be after that one! It seems to grow everywhere!'

She did not like the gloomy banyan trees with their roots hanging from their lower branches. They looked unnatural, weird and witch-like, she thought.

'Oh, our old breadfruit tree!' Mr Fisher-Cooke smiled, following Jane's pointing finger with his eyes.

It was a noble-looking tree, with its great leaves, like giant hands with fingers spread out from broad palms. Some of its leaves were over a foot long, and from its branches fruit as large as footballs, with stubbly skins, hung down. On others, Jane had noticed, the breadfruit were long and narrow, like marrows.

'These are direct descendants of the breadfruit plants that Bligh brought out to the West Indies', Mr Fisher-Cooke said. 'You've seen the film, *The Mutiny on the Bounty*, I daresay, and remember that Bligh was in the South Seas in order to get breadfruit plants to bring to the West Indies. He was a determined man, and he went back on a second voyage, collected his plants, and brought them safely out to these parts. They really are the "bread" of the people here.'

'I know. We've had it everywhere!' David said. 'Hot and cold, baked and boiled and steamed, and roasted!'

'We need it even more than most of the islands, here', Mr Fisher-Cooke said. 'We're pretty badly off for fruit in Barbados. We actually have to import it!'

'Oh, surely not! This looks a most flourishing tropical island!' Puffer put in.

'Well, the soil's not very good, you know. Barbados is different from the West Indies geographically as well as in every other way. She's a coral island, not a volcanic one, so her soil is coral limestone, like a Pacific island's, dry and porous. That's the very reason why it's so good for sugar-cane, though. Sugar-cane likes rain, but just enough, and not too much.'

'Like bananas', David said. 'They go sour if the rain gathers round their roots.'

'That's so, boy. As the coral's porous we don't have to drain it away', Mr Fisher-Cooke said. 'The water trickles through.'

'I like the look of your cane', Puffer said dreamily. 'Bright green, soft, waving fronds, fields and fields of it. I don't know why it should, but it looks like grass—reminds me of the Sussex Downs.'

'That's partly because we're so flat—and that's another reason why we do so well with sugar', their host said. 'We've no mountains, so we can cultivate every acre, every inch almost! In fact, I've heard it said that there's practically nothing on Barbados besides our big sugar estates, Bridgetown, and some beautiful beaches! We produce a hundred thousand tons of sugar every year, you know. That's an awful lot of sugar.'

He rose and led his guests up onto the veranda, and pointed out over the countryside.

'We're a bit old-fashioned in our methods of cultivation, as in everything else!' he said. 'Look at those sugar mills. Some of them are still in use, believe it or not! Trollope complained we were behind the times a hundred years ago for using them!'

A trim little greenish-brown sparrow had flown down from the *lignum-vitæ* tree as soon as they had moved away. They watched him help himself to sugar from the sugar bowl.

'He's very tame', Mr Fisher-Cooke said, 'he's always coming into the house to see me. We've got a great many birds in Barbados which aren't found anywhere else in the world.'

'I'm not surprised, if there are many gardens like this one in Barbados!' Jane said. 'It's simply lovely!'

She had never seen a more beautiful garden. Trumpet trees, giant cannas in bloom, tiger-lilies, honeysuckle, stephanotis, and jasmine made an enchanting home for darting humming-birds, petcharies, nightingales, banana quits, and a dozen other birds she had never seen before.

'They say our birds don't sing', Mr Fisher-Cooke said. 'Don't you believe it! You ought to hear our nightingale at night singing in the *lignum-vitae* tree under our Barbadian moon! Why, he even drowns the frogs and the croaking lizards! Look up there, very carefully, and you'll see our own special Barbadian dove.'

They all looked, silently. At last a slight movement betrayed the dove. They saw a little bird, now purple and now brown in the flickering sunlight. It seemed to be looking straight at them, and it was making a prolonged, gentle cooing, so peaceful and soft it was almost lost in the rustle of the leaves and the sighing of the wind, which never seemed to fall in Barbados.

'What a sad little dove!' Jane cried. 'He looks so very disapproving!'

'He disapproves of progress, I expect!' Mr Fisher-Cooke said, 'being a true-born Barbadian! Yes, we're very slow and old-fashioned in Barbados. We don't like to hurry. It takes a long time before a new English law comes into force here—why, we haven't long agreed to allow divorce, and women are only just beginning to practise law and medicine out here—and we're still using bullock-waggons to haul cane in the fields. But that's the way we happen to like it.'

'I like it, too', Puffer agreed. 'There's something catching about the Barbadian frame of mind, and I've caught it. I'm a lazy chap at heart!'

'Oh, don't imagine we aren't *efficient* in Barbados, just

because we're conservative in our ways!' Mr Fisher-Cooke impressed on him. 'You wouldn't get on well here if you're really lazy! Why, do you know, although we're such a small island, less than thirty miles long and ten miles wide, we've gone on, year after year, steadily producing more sugar than the French islands, Martinique and Guadeloupe.'

Puffer, remembering Martinique, was not quite as surprised as he should perhaps have been.

'Some years we've even done better than Trinidad!'

Now, that really was surprising.

'And that's just simply because we're efficient and hard-working.'

Indeed, if they were slow in Barbados at adopting new ideas they took up those they chose with enthusiasm. They had a Central Sugar Cane Breeding Station for the whole of Barbados, where they developed many new varieties of seedlings.

'Its work has spread all over the West Indies', Mr Fisher-Cooke boasted, with pardonable pride. 'You'll find that wherever there's good cane in the fields the seedlings came from this little island!'

* * *

The Fulfords left Mr Fisher-Cooke's beautiful eighteenth-century house reluctantly. Puffer gave long, loving last looks at the carved doorways, the fluted columns, and the acanthus leaves on the ceilings; at the old portraits of Mr Fisher-Cooke's ancestors in powdered wigs; at the Sheraton, Chippendale, and Heppelwhite furniture so carefully copied by West Indian cabinet-makers, the Georgian silver and the china in the china cabinets.

'It is hard to believe we aren't in an English house', he said.

'Barbados has always been known as "Little England", and we're proud of the name.'

So they gave a final look to the long, white house, with its

jalousies and porticos, waved to their host, and were borne away.

* * *

Puffer found his way back to the Careenage at once—the inner harbour at Bridgetown, where ships had been laid up to be careened in the old days. It was still a sailor's delight, and David would have happily spent the rest of his time in Barbados standing and staring at the dozens of island schooners and sloops moored in double rows alongside the quays, and at the ships down from the Newfoundland Banks with cargoes of dried fish, soon to return with their holds full of the barrels of molasses and the pale Barbados rum which were in evidence everywhere. Some of them would never return; they would end their days in the Caribbean.

David had heard of the schooner fleet of almost a hundred ships which was based on Barbados. The schooners were lovely to look at, but probably not comfortable to sail in, he thought, and the smaller craft which carried fruit, coal, and timber up and down the islands seemed even rougher vessels.

'Oh, yes, sah, *some* of dem hab engines!' a burly coloured sailor in a striped jersey told him, removing his naval cap. 'But mostly dey only has sails!'

The skippers were all West Indians—cheerful and happy-go-lucky fellows. David begged so hard that Puffer asked if they might be allowed on board one of the ships; the *Araminta*.

'But you've got no instruments!' David said in astonishment to the brawny brown skipper. 'How do you manage?'

Scratching the back of his head under his cap lazily, 'We don' need any!' the skipper said. 'At least, we don' need all dose t'ings you white people need! We get dere all right, and we come back too—mos' of the time!' He roared with laughter at his joke, his fine deep voice resounding across the water and making everyone else join in.

The Speightstown schooners, which sailed down the west coast under the lee of the land, and back again, horrified Puffer.



Coastal scenery in Trinidad.



ABOVE A steel band plays for dancers in Trinidad BELOW Workers on the Pitch Lake with the special mattocks they use for digging pitch



'Why, they look as if they'd fall to pieces if you touched them!' he said.

'Dey do!' the skipper of the *Araminta* said. 'Dey do, sah, sometimes! Only a li'l while ago one of dem sink down—right to de bottom ob de sea! Ha! Ha! The cargo fall right out of the bottom of the boat! Man! but it was funny! I laff till I sick!'

'Did anyone get hurt?' Jane added, perturbed.

'No, nobody get hurt!' the skipper said. 'Ever'boday swim to shore all right. I laff till I nearly fall down dead dat day! Yes, sir!'

'Well, well, some sight-seeing, now!' Puffer said, tearing himself away. 'It's often boring, and it's always exhausting, but one's always so sorry afterwards if one doesn't do it! I'm a martyr to my conscience.'

So they trotted dutifully off to inspect the solid and mid-Victorian Hall of Assembly, and David and Jane gazed obediently up at the coloured windows surrounding the chamber with their portraits of kings and queens—or, rather, the rulers of England—from the time of James the First.

'Why, there's Oliver Cromwell!' Puffer exclaimed. 'I was told to look out for him. He and the Barbadians were at loggerheads, as the Barbadians were Royalists to a man, so it's rather big-hearted of them to have him up there.'

'I suppose I ought to know all about that?' David said, enquiringly.

Barbados was different from all the other British West Indian islands, Puffer explained, because she'd been found uninhabited, and never conquered. The others had all been fought for, won, lost, fought for again, and ruled by various nations one after another. But from the day in 1608 when the captain of the *Olive Blossom* had set up a cross on the shore and cut an inscription on a tree, 'James K of E and of the Islã:d', Barbados had been simply, calmly, and peaceably English to the core. Apparently no one had wanted her before

and no one had ever tried to get her afterwards. The only troubles had been civil ones, between the Royalists and the Roundheads. But even those had been conducted in a gentlemanly and magnanimous way, as the head of Oliver Cromwell in the Hall of Assembly before them bore witness.

'Cromwell sent a fleet to reduce the island', Puffer said. 'After Charles I was beheaded the Royalists had proclaimed Charles II "King of England and of Barbados" like his grandfather fifty years before, and he didn't like that. The islanders tried to prevent his men landing but they failed, and the Hole and Speightstown were occupied.

'What a storm in a teacup!' Jane said scornfully.

'Don't you ever let any "true-born Barbadian" hear you say that!' Puffer warned. 'You'd be executed! They're a peaceful people, but there are some things they won't stand for—and one of them's any suggestion that Barbados isn't the most important place on earth!'

Barbados had taken over England's law and constitution, her parishes, parish churches, parish priests, and parish schools, Puffer went on. For three hundred years she had gone on as she had begun.

The first settlers had found no foreign tradition on the island, as they did in Trinidad, and in Jamaica, for instance. That meant that there were no loose ends, no left-over bits of another nation's customs and laws and language and ways of thought to be discarded, adopted or adapted. There were, in fact, no ready-made problems in Barbados. The island was a clean slate, English from the beginning, and English right through.

'Call it a museum-piece, if you like. It is, in a way—a piece of Stuart England preserved, but living and breathing. But it is one you can be proud of!'

Barbadians were inordinately proud of the fact that their Parliament was (as they claimed) the third oldest, in the Empire.

'One can't be quite sure they're right', Puffer said, 'but what they say is that the House of Commons is the oldest, Bermuda's House of Assembly second, and then comes this one.'

'What about the Manx House of Keys?' David asked.

'Bright boy! Exactly. The Manx House of Keys and the Channel Islands Parliaments might well have a word to say to that claim. Anyway, Barbados' Parliament is pretty old, and that's what really matters.'

The periwigged Speaker came into the Chamber at that moment in his gown and white tie, a gowned clerk carrying his mace before him, an Anglican clergyman following him. The Speaker's procession was a replica of the one they had both watched at home in Westminster. The small gold mace was placed carefully on its stand, and the Speaker took his seat under the Lion and the Unicorn.

The seating of the Chamber was different from that of the House of Commons, however. The members were seated facing the Speaker, and were all at a great semi-circular table, instead of in rows on either side of his chair.

Puffer pointed out that the majority of the representatives in the Chamber were coloured men.

'They say they're very narrow-minded about colour in Barbados', he said, 'and draw a strong colour-line socially. But they cannot be all that bad if they have a coloured Prime Minister and three-quarters of their Members are coloured men!'

They listened to the debates for a while. The speeches were not very inspiring, and the Members looked sleepy, half-lying back and fanning themselves with palm-leaf fans.

They hoped for more fire when the leader of the party in power, Mr Grantley Adams, rose to speak; for this big Negro lawyer and Oxford graduate had a reputation for militancy. A Salvation Army band outside was making so much noise that he shrugged his shoulders, made a face, and subsided with his fan again after a few minutes. So the Fulfords

trooped outside, to stare at the statue of Nelson which the House of Assembly overlooked.

'It used to be painted a bright pea-green', Puffer said sleepily, beginning to be overcome by the heat and the yawny atmosphere of the place.

'Why, he's looking out over Trafalgar Square here, too!' Jane discovered. 'But he's not on a tall pillar like ours, is he?—so he's not nearly so impressive!'

'Well, there's one great advantage to that', Puffer rejoined, looking mischievous. 'You can *see* what he looks like! Only the pigeons know in London!'

When they had finished their dutiful tour of the sights it was time for tea, and they went into the teashop over Goddard's shop, the great meeting-place of the people of Bridgetown whenever they felt like a gossip.

There as they sat waiting for their order to be taken, and thinking that they had not come across tea-shops anywhere else in the West Indies, and that was perhaps the most English thing they had met yet about Barbados, they heard cricket scores, garden parties at Government House, the thoroughbred horses bred in the island, and the latest leading article in the *Barbados Advocate* being discussed. Everybody seemed to know everybody else's business, but to be very careful not to know everybody else, Jane thought.

* * *

Mr Fisher-Cooke telephoned Puffer at his hotel.

'So you've done the Carriage? Have you seen the Pottery Market? And the Hall of Assembly? Well, you ought to go over Codrington College! It was founded by a Governor General here, and is really for training young men who want to go into the Churches, but we've got other students there—about twenty or so. But it's vacation time, and you've earned a rest, anyway! What would you like to do? Golf?—We've got a nine-hole golf course. Tennis? Cricket? I promise you something worth seeing! Polo? There's good polo on the

Savannah. Or sailing? Flying fishing?—we do a lot here! Or would you just like to go for a drive?—you can drive all over the island, if you like, we've got five hundred miles of first-class roads! Or shall we just go to the Yacht Club and be lazy?'

'Let's be very English and compromise', Puffer suggested. 'Let's go for a drive first and end up at the Yacht Club!'

So they drove along the excellent motor-roads, out through the clustering suburbs. They were all astounded to find miniature reproductions of seaside resorts in England, with their Marine and Windsor Hotels, their Ocean Views and Glenalvons, places which were even called by names like Hastings and Worthing.

'Fancy coming all this way just to find Worthing all over again!' Jane said.

'And they're even inhabited by retired English colonels and admirals!' Mr Fisher-Cooke agreed.

Then they were out among the cornfields and the yam-plots, and the fields of guinea corn, now and then getting out of the car to admire a sweeping view down to the Atlantic. Every mile or so they found an avenue of cabbage palms or shaddock trees leading up to a pleasant plantation house. None of the scenery was dramatic, but it was neat and pleasant and undulating.

'It's so comforting!' Jane said.

The Royal Barbados Yacht Club was very select. Puffer noticed that there were no Negroes there.

It was washed by the Caribbean on the leeward side, and beaten by the Atlantic surf on the windward. They lay on the perfect, fine sand on the calm side, and bathed in the warm, glass-clear sea. Afterwards, warmed and thirsty, they strolled back to the Club veranda across the beautiful lawns.

'And now for the most famous thing in Barbados!' Mr Fisher-Cooke said, 'far more famous than our Parliament!' Then he said, 'None for you David and Jane, I'm afraid. You'll have to be content with lemonade!'

'Limeade, please!' Jane corrected him. She was a complete convert to the sharp green little West Indian limes.

Puffer and Mr Fisher-Cooke sipped their rum swizzles, lying back blissfully in deck-chairs, while Mr Fisher-Cooke explained just how good Barbados rum was, and how cheap, and how a swizzle was made.

'One of sweet, two of sour, three of strong and four of weak,' he said, 'sugar, lime juice, rum, and crushed ice. Then you stir it fast, round and round, with the swizzle-stick!'

And he brandished the 'swizzle' which stood in his own glass.

'Ah, I hear you singing the National Anthem of the West Indies!' the passing Vice-Commodore of the Club remarked, clasping Mr Fisher-Cooke's shoulder as he went by. 'But has your friend had sangaree to drink yet? Oh, what have you been doing, man? You must take him to the Bridgetown Club and give him sangaree!'

Puffer had to hear what sangaree was, of course, and was delighted to learn that it was an eighteenth-century drink, made from Madeira and richly flavoured with limes, nutmeg, and sugar, and iced, and still served in Barbados in traditional fashion here and there.

The Vice-Commodore turned to Jane, and told her that among the wedding presents of the Queen, when as Princess Elizabeth she had married the Duke of Edinburgh, had been an eighteenth-century sangaree glass made for the owner of the Windsor Plantation, Barbados, and inscribed 'Success to Windsor'. It had been given by the women and girls of Barbados, who had considered the inscription most apt and fitting to the occasion.

* * *

Sam Lord's Castle was the object of their visit next day.

It stood on the rocky windward coast, a strange house looking like an imitation fortress cut by a child out of cardboard—the façade was made like one, but there was no strength to it.

'Sam Lord was a wrecker', Mr Fisher-Cooke told them, 'and a very successful one, too. On stormy nights he used to lure cargo vessels to their destruction by hanging up lanterns in the trees down there—and on the jagged rocks down below, or in the tops of those coconut trees.'

They looked along the long sandy bay, and out over the blue waters hiding the dangerous reef.

'A mean, vile trade, wrecking', Puffer said, as they walked over the house, which had been converted into a luxurious hotel, 'it's shocking that he should have been able to make so much money out of it, and get away scot-free!'

He was looking at the mahogany pillars, the plaster ceilings, the carvings and the chandeliers. It was certainly a rich and grandiose affair, but without any of the grace they had found in Mr Fisher-Cooke's house.

The grounds and gardens were well laid out and pleasant. Here and there thick-leaved cactus plants stood, with names and hearts and arrows and initials cut deep into them. There were notices dotted about asking visitors to refrain from this detestable practice.

'Disgusting looking, isn't it?' Mr Fisher-Cooke said, 'But I must admit I've done it in my day! It's the most satisfying feeling, carving in cactus, far more satisfactory than desk-tops or tree-trunks!'

'No, David! No, Jane!' Puffer said, catching the longing looks in their eyes. 'You certainly may not!'

* * *

On their way through the arid rugged district known as Scotland, over on the eastern side of the island, Mr Fisher-Cooke asked them to pay particular attention to the people they passed.

They were a poor-looking lot, unkempt and wretched-looking, and their houses were miserable shanties. Men and women lolled about in doorways, leaned languidly over fences, or worked in the fields in ragged clothes.

'Do you notice anything about them?' Mr Fisher-Cooke asked.

'Why, yes! They're white!' David said, suddenly realizing it. 'They're white, and they're poor. The two don't go together out here.'

They had blue eyes and fair hair bleached by the sun. Their hair was coarse and untended.

'They're the Redlegs', Mr Fisher-Cooke said. 'They are descendants of the followers of the Duke of Monmouth. After they were defeated at Sedgemoor Judge Jeffreys tried them at his Bloody Assizes, and deported them. They lived and worked with the slaves, and it seems to have broken their spirits completely. At any rate, a lot of them didn't bother to go home when their time was up—or perhaps they couldn't manage it. They've been here ever since. Occasionally their numbers have been added to by convicts sent out here. But it's rather strange, considering what one can't help feeling is a sort of weakness of character, that they've had this particular strong-mindedness—obstinacy—call it what you like—about keeping their blood pure. They've hardly intermarried at all.'

They gazed at a poor wretch standing barefoot in the roadway, a load of sugarcane in his arms, an enamel canister of food tied in a red handkerchief balanced on his head, his blue cotton trousers in tatters, and reaching hardly below his knees.

'Don't they ever do better than that?' Puffer asked. 'Doesn't one of them ever rise in the island life and—become a really useful man in the community?'

'No. It's odd', Mr Fisher-Cooke said, 'especially here in the West Indies, where it's so easy for a white man to rise to the top. But these people have always been like this, and lived like this. It's just as if their spirit was broken for ever at the Battle of Sedgemoor, and even the centuries can't mend it.'

'If you'd had more time', Mr Fisher-Cooke said on their last day, as they were saying their goodbyes 'we might have done a bit of delving for buried treasure! Yes, I thought that would interest you, David!'

He told him of the stretch of beach which was well-known to have been a hiding-place for the buccaneers, when they had captured treasure from the Spanish fleet sailing home from Cartagena to Corunna or Cadiz. They were themselves good targets for the attacks of the French and English pirates who also ranged the Caribbean.

'They had to find somewhere to get rid of it, and quickly!' Mr Fisher-Cooke said. 'Barbados was a good place. What better? It was uninhabited! For the whole of the sixteenth century it was quiet and undisturbed, and they could land and hide their booty and go away, with no one the wiser.'

There were Madonnas of solid gold, he said, supposed to be hidden on that stretch of shore, and chests and chests of doubloons and pieces of eight for the digging. People were always trying. Some day someone would be successful, without doubt.

Then the last moment had come to bid farewell. Puffer knew that George Washington had once visited the island as a young man of only 19—he had had the misfortune to catch smallpox there—and he had got a sententious little speech of farewell ready for Mr Fisher-Cooke.

'Well', he said now, 'I can only say that I agree with George Washington's judgment on Barbados—that "hospitality and genteel behaviour is shown to every Gentleman Stranger by the inhabitants".'

'And to every Lady Stranger, too', Jane concluded, rather primly, so that it all ended in everyone laughing at her.

CHAPTER VIII

A 'LITTLE INDIA'—TRINIDAD

'WHAT on earth', Puffer asked dazedly, 'is that?' He rubbed his eyes and looked again.

'Yes, what on earth is that?' he repeated, 'Trinidad's idea of What the Well Dressed Man Should Wear?'

'That' was walking down the street. Jane and David had seen 'Teddy Boys' in London. They were used to their Edwardian trousers narrowing towards the ankles, and their wide-shouldered, long coats falling halfway to their knees. But this was a 'Teddy Boy *de luxe*!'

'That', Mr Patel said, 'is a Saga Boy.' Mr Patel was their 'contact' in Trinidad, a young lawyer of some repute.

The Saga Boy was a tall Negro. He wore a voluminous coat in purple cloth. There were no padded shoulders, but the waist was very tight, and the garment dropped almost to his knees. It was, he explained, called a Bim-Bim or Saga-Boy Coat. His knife-edged trousers, of the same colour, were strangely cut: very full at the knee, and tapering till they were as tight-fitting as jodhpurs.

'He must need zippers to get his feet through those turn-ups', Puffer grinned, 'or shoe horns; especially with those great gondolas he's got on.'

His shoes were very large and very smart, in ox-blood red and yellow.

'I like his belt', David volunteered. 'I've never seen a transparent plastic belt before!'

'What about his tie?' his father asked scathingly, 'Wouldn't you like me to get you one?' It was like a sunset, and an unbelievable one, even in the West Indies.

But his shirt was the most colourful item about the Saga Boy. High-collared and deep-cuffed, its yellow background was decorated with a medley of red hearts, blue daggers,

purple bows-and-arrows, and green true-love-knots. The cuff links matched his tie-pin, gold glittering with rhinestones. A thick watch chain hung from his waist, almost touched his knee, and disappeared into a trouser pocket.

'Well, I must say he's beautifully clean and well-pressed anyway!' Jane offered, trying to say something nice in case Mr Patel's feelings were hurt.

'They're what the Americans call "wide boys",' Mr Patel said. 'They're usually rather disreputable, and they have a sort of language of their own. Like your Teddy Boys, you know, only more so.'

'Definitely more so', Puffer murmured, staring after the Saga Boy. He was quite unperturbed, raised his snap-brim hat in a mock gesture of salute, swept it in an arc, and strolled on.

'What do they do for a living?' Puffer asked, 'I don't know *who* would employ a chap looking like that!'

Mr Patel shrugged his shoulders. 'Don't ask me', he said. 'It's a question'.

Mr Patel was showing the Fulfords the sights of Port of Spain, Trinidad's capital. The word that was always used about Port of Spain, he said, was 'cosmopolitan'.

'People mean that a lot of different races live in Port of Spain when they say that', he said. 'Look around you, and I'll point out British, Spanish, Portuguese, Germans, Chinese, Negroes, descendants of the French Creoles and, of course, many, many East Indians like myself! If I can't show you one in the flesh I'll show you his name on a shop sign!'

He was as good as his word. Standing there on a street corner, he showed them a Spanish barber shop, and then a Syrian storekeeper, a German behind the counter in a milk-bar, a Portuguese-Jewish chemist in a drug store, a picture palace which was run by a 'Britisher', a German optician, and a Swiss watchmender. Then he added a Chinese, a Hindu and a French Creole all passing on the pavement.

'As for Americans', he said, 'look around you. They've been here during the war, and they still come.' Everyone around them was chewing gum, not only the Americans, they could see!

'But don't you believe it's really cosmopolitan, as you mean it in Europe!' Mr Patel went on. 'The races huddle together, each to their own. Most of all, we Indians—there are enough of us to give Trinidad the nickname of Little India—keep ourselves to ourselves. We don't weld.'

'The currency is a bit cosmopolitan here, anyway!' Puffer laughed. 'As far as I can see it's both English *and* American!'

'The dollar's the unit—it's worth four shillings and twopence; that's fixed', Mr Patel said. 'But under a dollar we use English coppers and silver coins. Plenty of threepenny bits here!'

'No wonder I got a bit mixed', Puffer said, 'and at the hotel I get my bills in dollars and cents, and pay in sterling. I've got to work it all out on paper. My mental arithmetic isn't up to all these changes from island to island!'

'I hope your weights and measures aren't as baffling', Jane said. 'I've never really got mine straight, even in English, and I want to take some Trinidad specialities back for Mother!'

'Well, don't buy her any cocoa, then!' Mr Patel advised her. 'Or let me do it for you. Cocoa is still sold by the *fanega*. That's the old Spanish measure, of 110 lb!'

The Spaniards had left their mark on Trinidad, David thought. One had only to look at a map to see that names like San Fernando, Valencia, and Manzanilla abounded, much exceeding, he thought, the English names like Brighton and Chatham, and the French names like Blanchisseuse. But English, French, and Spanish had all equally been submerged under the tide of East Indians. Trinidad, he would have said, was not 'cosmopolitan' at all, but an Indian island where many strangers also walked.

He was looking up at that moment at a great mosque, 'its

onion-shaped domes and minarets startlingly white and Eastern-looking against the china-blue sky. Plaintive Indian songs came to him, with their thin minor notes sobbing on the air. Everywhere he looked was a Moslem banner or a Pakistan flag. Women and dark little girls walked the streets in sugar-pink and verdigris-green saris, bracelets on their wrists, and men with turbans and wearing dhotis padded by on bare feet, their inquisitive black eyes raking his face as they passed.

'But how did so many Indians ever come to Trinidad?' he asked.

'Oh, that's easy!' Mr Patel smiled a flashing smile at him, passing his hand over his sleek black head. 'When the slaves were freed, about a hundred and twenty years ago, the Negroes refused to work. They just squatted on the land, living off what they could grow to eat, and moving on when the ground was exhausted. The sugar-owners were frantic and tried to get labourers from abroad. Two or three thousand Indians, mostly Bengalese, came to Trinidad every year as indentured labourers, and went on till the end of the first World War. Mostly they didn't bother to go back when their period came to an end. Now, as I told you, they're—we're—a third of the population.'

'Are most of you Moslems?' Puffer asked, 'I noticed a Mosque—'

'No, we're mostly Hindus', Mr Patel smiled. He told Puffer of the temples scattered about Trinidad, in particular the Temple of Vishnu, where the walls were frescoed with the figures of Shiva and Parvati and her son Katri.

'Go to Curepe', he said, 'and you will see Ganesh with his elephant trunk and his many arms, and Krishna dancing, with a tiara of peacocks' feathers, on a five-headed cobra. We brought our gods with us, and we keep up our ceremonies, our fastings and our feasting.'

'But come with me', he said, 'for today I want to show you

something very far removed from our Hindu temples. It is very much a part of Trinidad, but it is African, not Indian, Trinidad. I want to show you a steel band!

'You just can't leave Trinidad till you've heard a steel band,' Mr Patel said again. 'They're unique, you know, and they're famous all over the world!'

'I've heard of them', Puffer said, 'though I've never heard one. Let's go.'

'I could take you down to the docks and the wharves to hear them', Mr Patel said. 'There are a lot of them practising in the slums, in pits on waste ground and so on—but it's squalid, and not suitable for the children. I'm going to take you to a private dance some friends are giving for their daughter's twenty-first—they're having a steel band.'

So they all went to the dance, Jane being allowed up for the occasion, and trying to look very grown up in the simple blue silk dress, with rosebuds at the neck and a sash, which was her only 'best'.

As they came through the door into the large, glassy-floored room, they were met by a deafening hullabaloo. The noise was metallic, a clangour loud enough to wake the dead. Jane instinctively put her fingers in her ears.

'What on earth's that tune, if tune it can be called?' Puffer complained, screwing up his face in an effort to remember. 'I can just vaguely recognize something about it.'

'I know!' David shrieked to him above the noise. 'It's "The Bluebells of Scotland"!'

His words were quite lost, as they drew nearer to the band, and Puffer had to lean close to his mouth to catch them when he tried again.

'Heaven forbid!' Puffer shrieked back. 'Not that! Not that! I couldn't bear it—that lovely tune!'

They were introduced to their host and hostess, who came close to them as they jitterbugged casually by, greeted them, and then jitterbugged on.

They could see the band across the floor, a collection of young Negroes in vivid costumes, silk shirts and scarves and sashes, with a banner above their heads. 'Duke Rodolfo's Steel Band' was embroidered on it in scarlet letters on a gold background. The musicians were very young, not much older than Jane and David, and were, they heard, drawn from the young men who worked in the docks. They had glasses of rum by their chairs.

Mr Patel saw that Puffer was not yet prepared to go any closer to the band than he was already, so he drew him away to a quiet—or quieter—corner, saying he would tell him a bit more about the band before he actually went up to meet the bandsmen and examine their instruments. Mercifully for Puffer's nerves, the band finished their rendering of 'The Bluebells of Scotland' just then, and he was able to hear Mr Patel in comparative comfort, disturbed only by what he called the 'pinging' in his ears which the noise of the band had left.

'You see', Mr Patel said, 'it all began about fifty years ago. The beating of drums was made illegal in Trinidad. Well, how could we Trinidadians live without our music? Drums were out, but we had to have something else. What about Carnival time just before Lent? It's no Carnival without music!'

'What did they do, then?' Puffer asked impatiently, holding his throbbing head.

'Well, they began to make instruments from old dustbin lids, spoons, rusty old pots and pans, tin-cans, bottles, and even bits of bamboo!'

'Doesn't sound very promising to me!' Puffer said. 'I should never have started to try.'

'Well, Trinidad's different! We in Trinidad can make music from anything! Well, naturally we couldn't get any *melody* from those things—'

'Why not give up, then? If you can't get melody, I should have thought you'd had it!' Puffer said. But Mr Patel could take any amount of what he called Puffer's 'teasing'.

'Oh, Mr Fulford, you are funny! You're forgetting rhythm—and we must *never* forget rhythm! You wouldn't like an ordinary dance band to be without the bass drum and the double bass, would you?'

'I shouldn't care!' Puffer said, 'I don't dance.'

'Well, but I think you would care, anyway; and this collection of empty vessels that we have gives us rhythmic beats, like those drums. The bandsmen had to sing to give melody—calypsos mostly.'

The steel band had started in the waste ground, wharves, and gutters of Trinidad, where it still flourished. But it had rapidly found its way from those unsavoury surroundings to private parties and dances. There were five thousand steel bandsmen in Port of Spain alone.

'The Queen heard one', Mr Patel said excitedly, 'when she went on her River Pageant in Coronation Year. She heard them playing from a barge. And another time the Queen Mother summoned the musicians to her marquee—it was at a garden party at Lambeth Palace, that time—and had them play to her. They played "When you're in Love" and "Blue Tango", ' he added reminiscently.

The musicians had soon risen from empty bowls and dustbin lids and so on to more ambitious objects. They had taken to empty oil drums—to be found in thousands round the oil depots and wharves of Trinidad.

The next big discovery was that if the oil drums were cut in different sizes and shapes, and then heated, they could produce a variety of notes and tones.

'Now it's an art!' Mr Patel vowed. 'You can't make instruments for a steel band unless you're a great craftsman, and have a fine, delicate ear for music.'

'If I had a fine, delicate ear for music', Puffer grumbled, still recalcitrant, 'I'd do something better with it than that!'

An empty forty-gallon drum was the most suitable object for their attentions, Mr Patel explained, and this was beaten

with a hammer until the surface stretched. This apparently gave the drum 'more ring', and made it easier to tune it.

Then with a blow lamp—or even a gas flame—the drum was heated and tempered to the correct pitch.

'You mark off the notes in circles and big semicircles with a steel punch and paint them—in silver, or red or gold, or any colour you take a fancy to! Each instrument has different sets of notes, and they are blended to form a wide range of melodious sounds!' They sounded rather like a xylophone and a Hawaiian guitar playing together.

Mr Patel insisted that Puffer should go across at this stage and meet the band, as he couldn't explain much more without the instruments.

There Puffer met Duke Rodolfo and his merry men, and shook hands with them, and wished them well, wondering how it was they weren't all stone deaf.

'Look,' Mr Patel was saying, 'here's a tune boom. It has nine notes.' He struck it with two tympani sticks covered with felt. 'We call it the tune boom because it takes the place of the double bass—that goes *boom boom!* when you pluck it, you remember? Then, here's the strum pan, that has fifteen notes, and it's called strum pan because it's our guitar—"strum" because, you know, you strum on a guitar, and "pan" because it's shaped like a pan, see?'

'I see', Puffer said.

'Then there's a ping pong. The ping pong has twenty-four notes! Isn't that something? That's as good as a solo instrument. Its name? Oh, that came because, when we first invented it, it could only produce two notes, and sounded like this—*ping! pong!*'

'So, although it has twenty-four notes now it's still called *ping pong* because it got that name when it was quite a different instrument and only had two? Oh, well, we're full of illogicalities in England too!' Puffer said negligently.

'How do you tune the instruments?' Jane asked.

'Oh, there's a very clever English Miss!' Mr Patel turned gratefully to her. 'We get concert pitch from the piano. If a note on one of the instruments needs flattening, then you just bang the curved bit on top into the lid with the wooden end of this tympani stick—so! Prod the other side of the strum pan or the ping pong, and the note's sharp. Easy!'

But the oil drums were not the only instruments the musicians had brought, although they seemed proudest of them. They saw a tock-tock, the sawn-off bottom of a kerosene tin—the bandsman used a spanner to strike the several triangles of different sizes which were attached to the rim.

'Fourteen notes on the tock-tock', the owner said proudly, and rang up each one, nearly two octaves of them, and all true and clear.

They saw another kerosene tin divided into seven deeper notes, known as belly; a large vaseline drum called base-kettle, and a vast biscuit container from a factory called the base-bum. But the brake-drum beaten unremittingly with an iron rod, a spare part from a motor-car, gave the best clash; and it was the shack-shack which Puffer blamed for his headache—a foot-long bamboo tube filled with pebbles.

The leader, Duke Rodolfo, was very proud of his band, and told Puffer how many rival steel bands they had beaten in contests. They had to practise in secret when a competition was coming off.

'Surely that's impossible!' David said.

Apparently it wasn't, quite—they went to any lengths, almost burying themselves in their pits or going far out to waste places so that no one could hear what they were doing.

'Best place for you all! Why don't you all just stay there? This isn't music! It's a barbaric noise!' Puffer said viciously, and they all roared with laughter.

'You wrong, you know', the leader said, 'steel band music is a *serious* t'ing! It started in de gutter, but it's way up de top of de tree now! One day you gwine to go to de Royal Albert

Hall and hear me and my men playing Bach and Beethoven our way!'

'Oh, Lord!' Puffer groaned, 'I hope not!'

Then the musicians settled down and struck up again. Puffer leapt across the room, and sat quivering on a chair against the wall. He tried not to listen, but it wasn't possible.

Then he noticed that Mr Patel, who had joined him with Jane and David, was smiling broadly. He seemed to be listening. Puffer noticed that the music had become softer and that the bandsmen were all singing—a monotonous, rhythmic sort of song with more beat than tune to it.

*'We would like just to say that we are very glad
To welcome you, Mr Fulford, to our isle of Trinidad,
And though our steel band music seems to cause you
much pain and torment,
We don't intend to take it to our detriment!
Some man come to Trinidad and go away a dipsomaniac,
And we hope that, anyway, Mr Fulford, you'll go away
a calypso-maniac.'*

'How intolerable', Puffer said. 'Now I shan't even be allowed to have my own opinion about calypsos!'

He stood up, looking very much less fierce than he had sounded, and told everyone how grateful he had been for the opportunity of hearing both steel bands and calypsos. He didn't say anything more about the steel bands, but he paid the calypso-makers a few fine compliments, saying that with all their faults they were at heart creating real, live folk-song, which was something that could be said of nowhere else in the world that he was aware of.

* * *

After the steel band Puffer took Jane and David to the quietest place he could find in Port of Spain. He sat very silent for a long time.

'You wouldn't think', he said, 'that these people live in an island full of birds. Have you noticed how many there are, and how they sing?'

'I can't say I thought birds were exactly scarce in the other islands', Jane admitted, 'but I do agree, the air seems thick with them here!'

'And haven't they got wonderful colours?' David said.

'There were once almost as many birds in Trinidad as in the whole of Europe, they say', Puffer said. 'It must have been splendid to live here then. When you think that Trinidad's only about as big as Lancashire—!'

'You said "once". What happened to them?' Jane asked. 'Mongoose?'

'Partly, I expect, but mostly it was women who were responsible for killing them off!'

'Women!' Jane was indignant. 'Never! Women love birds! It's men who shoot them!'

'Yes, Miss! Women with their fashions. Hats', he elucidated, shaking his head sorrowfully at Jane, as if she represented the whole of womankind.

'You needn't shake your head at me!' Jane said. 'I'd never wear a bird in a hat of mine!'

'You know, there were so many hummingbirds here once that the Caribs called the island after them, The Land of the Humming Bird, long before Columbus came. Then the fashionable ladies of Europe took to wearing birds in their hats, and fifteen thousand of the poor little things were stuffed and exported every week, week after week, year after year.'

They fell silent, listening to the birdsong of Trinidad, and especially to the song of the little black and gold bird known as the '*Qu'est-ce qu'il dit?*' because of its day-long questioning cry.

CHAPTER IX

BLACK GOLD AND 'KING SUGAR'

MR PATEL's daughter, Laurel, came with them next day on their drive to La Brea.

'Would you believe it, she's never seen the famous pitch lake? Isn't it scandalous?' Mr Patel said.

'That's like Londoners who never go to see the Tower of London!' Jane said. 'I always felt ashamed with country cousins who had, until I went too!'

Laurel was 14, with long black pigtails. She did not wear a sari, but a dress and sandals.

They drove for fifty miles beyond Port of Spain before they came to the lake, 'the most amazing natural wonder in the West Indies', as Mr Patel described it.

'It ought to be one of the Seven Wonders of the World', Laurel remarked.

The sun was hot although it was still early, as they gazed across the lake's broad expanse. They shaded their eyes with the palms of their hands for it was very exposed.

'Just stand over here', Mr Patel said, 'with your backs to the factory, then you'll be looking at exactly what Sir Walter Raleigh saw more than three hundred and fifty years ago. It hasn't really changed.'

'Oh, did Raleigh see the pitch lake?' David asked. 'I wonder what he thought of it?'

'Oh, but we *know*!' Puffer replied for Mr Patel, fishing out his notebook. 'I made a note of it—I'll be quoting him in my next article. It was in 1595 that he touched at La Brea.'

He read out:

'At this point called Tierra de Brea or Piche there is that abundance of stone piche, that all the ships of the world may be therewith loden from thence, and wee made triall of it in trimming our ships to be most excellent good, and melteth

not with the sunne as the pitch of Norway, and therefore for ships trading to the south partes very profitable.'

'Well, I must say', Jane blurted out suddenly, frankness getting the better of tact as it often did with her, 'it may be wonderful, but I don't *like* it much! It doesn't look like a lake, for one thing—and it's jolly dreary-looking, for another!'

'That's right, old girl!' Puffer encouraged her. 'Get it off your chest! I never could stand people who just thought what they were supposed to think! Let's hear what's wrong with the lake—if Mr Patel will forgive you!'

Mr Patel shrugged his shoulders. 'It's O.K. by me', he said.

'Well, I thought it was going to be a *lake*, a lovely, oozy, treacly black lake!' Jane said. 'Liquid, you know! But it isn't. It's hard; all dingy, and grey, and hard.' She poked at it with her foot. '*Why, you can walk about on it!*'

She pointed to some men working on the surface. 'Just look over there!'

'I agree', David said, in his slow, definite way. 'It's like a great big tarpaulin spread out. It's just like a mac. You can't get it really flat, it's always got ridges and crinkles and hollows, like this—'

'—where the rainwater's collected—' Jane put in.

'—and it's all rather dusty-looking, too. And those scrubby trees round about in a circle make it look so sad and deserted.'

'Dreary and dingy, bare and blasted and lost and forgotten!' Mr Patel was driven to interrupt. 'Let me say something for our poor old lake. Perhaps you can walk about on it, but it's oozy enough underneath, I assure you. Why, out there, in the middle, the pitch bubbles upwards all the time. It's very deceptive, too. If your father drove his car out onto our lake he wouldn't find it very hard—it would begin to sink down after a few minutes!'

'Has that ever happened?' Laurel asked her father.

'Yes, but if you put planks under the wheels you'll be all

right. Besides', Mr Patel added, 'you don't want to trust the lake even away from the middle. It varies very much, some bits are pretty soft. Look at *that* chap over there, for instance!'

They saw a hefty Negro surrounded by a party of tourists waving his arms and shouting as if in mortal terror. He had already sunk up to his ankles, and seemed to be gradually slipping further and further in as they watched.

'Oh, why doesn't someone rescue him?' Jane asked, beginning to get worried. She looked as if she would set off to the rescue at any moment.

Mr Patel laughed.

'I was pulling your leg!' he said. 'And so is he! He rolled his trousers up above his knees, you'll notice, before he started to sink. His chum will pull him out in a minute, and then they'll both pass the hat round. But he's proved my point—some bits of the lake are softer than others.'

'I wouldn't like to have to clean all that muck off my legs', David said. 'It must be pretty painful if he's hairy!'

'I expect he wet his legs first', Mr Patel said. 'That helps. If you wet your hands before you pull up a piece of pitch it won't stick to you.'

'So it's all rot, that "you can't touch pitch without being defiled"! Puffer exclaimed. 'I think that'll do for my headline—You *Can* Touch Pitch and Not be Defiled.'

'I suppose you couldn't give me the measurements, Patel?' he asked, pulling out his notebook again.

'Yes, I do know roughly', Mr Patel said. 'Let me see. The circular bowl's about three miles round, and the area's about 114 acres, I believe. I know it's a mile and a half across.'

While Puffer scribbled hastily he told the children about the Mother of the Lake.

'That's what they call the centre bit', he said. 'It's very fresh and soft, and at least 285 feet deep. Make no mistake, it's not so innocent as it looks! It's always moving, though you can't see the undercurrents.'

'How do you know?' Jane asked.

'Well, once they threw in a piece of pipe. It was about 160 feet long. They hoped they could touch bottom with it, but of course they couldn't, they lost their pipe—it came up eventually, years and years later, and 800 feet away from where it had gone down! And it was all battered and twisted and beaten out of shape. Oh, there's some pretty strange goings-on under your old mackintosh!'

'Talking of that', Puffer said, 'do you ever get anything odd out of it with the pitch? I expect one or two things have fallen in during the centuries!'

'Oh, yes', Mr Patel said. 'About twenty-five years ago the lake threw up a tree stump. I know that doesn't sound very interesting—only it happened to be about five thousand years old!'

'Did we keep it, Father?' Laurel asked.

'No, it came up slowly, stayed upright for a few days—we could see about ten feet of it—and then tilted and sank. But they have got some Carib bowls and things in the offices over there that have been dug up, too. And they've occasionally got up bones, and once they got a mastodon tooth. When that mastodon walked in Trinidad, Trinidad was still part of the American continent!'

'Doesn't the lake ever dry up?' Jane asked, more chastened now. 'I mean—all those thousands of years of digging pitch out, it must make some difference!'

'It sinks about a foot a year nowadays', Mr Patel said. 'But it only sank about twenty feet in the three centuries since Raleigh saw it. I suppose altogether millions and millions of tons of pitch have been dug out of it. It's like a bowl of porridge—you take out a spoonful, the surface gets smooth again, but the general level is a little lower.'

'So the bowl's going to be empty one day?' David asked.

'Not for a long, long time! We can supply the needs of the whole world in asphalt for a long time to come before this

lake gives out!' Mr Patel said proudly, 'and we'll need to, for asphalt made with Trinidad pitch is the best in the world.'

'Does Trinidad asphalt go on all the roads in the world?' Jane asked.

'Well,' Mr Patel said. 'The Company (it's the New Trinidad Lake Asphalt Company) has got to compete with asphalt manufactured as a by-product of crude oil nowadays.'

'At least there are no other competitors of its own kind?' Puffer questioned.

'No, there's only one other pitch lake in the world—and the Company owns that one too! It's in Venezuela. They don't work it now, just lease it, because this one can deal with all orders. Next time you look at the Thames Embankment, Jane and David, you can remember today. That's Trinidad pitch there!'

'I love the smell of hot tar', Jane said. 'I'll remember this whenever I smell hot tar, always.'

'I wonder how it happened?' David asked. 'The lake, I mean.'

'There's a legend about that', Mr Patel said. 'The Chayma tribe used to live where the lake is now long, long ago. They had a tribal taboo against killing humming birds. But once they had a great victory over their enemies, and in celebration they killed a great many of the birds, and ate them. Then they decorated themselves with the beautiful feathers. The gods were angry—the birds were the souls of the dead, you see—'

'Albatrosses are still said to be the souls of dead sailors', Puffer interpolated.

'—and the Great Spirit made a great hole open in the earth and sent a black tide of pitch to swallow up the sinful tribe.'

'I can almost believe that story, looking at this astounding lake', Puffer said.

'But what do the *scientists* say?' David asked. He had no time for legends.

'They say there was a deep crack down far below the surface of the earth. Oil and gas came up and brimmed over—and there's your asphalt lake!'

The sun's rays had become quite ferocious. The men who had been hacking up the great lumps of crude asphalt with axes and carrying them to the light tramway (which would take them down to the shore, where they would be refined) were throwing down their tools and going off. The sweat streamed over their black glistening bodies, and they mopped their brows with large coloured handkerchiefs.

'Even these fellows can't work without any shade in the full noonday heat!' Mr Patel said. 'They're knocking off for the afternoon. They work in shifts—from three in the morning till eight, then from eight onwards till noon. They work in gangs of six, you'll notice. One to hack out the asphalt, and the others to carry off the chunks. That fellow over there', and he pointed to an enormous mulatto with a yellowish skin, 'can carry a hundred pounds a go!'

'What happens to it afterwards?' David asked.

'Both the crude and the refined asphalt are exported. It's packed in barrels as dried asphalt, or perhaps shipped as asphalt cement in steel drums. (You remember the steel drums the steel bandmen use to make their instruments?) The Company is American, you know. It ships about a hundred thousand tons a year.'

'That must do the island a lot of good!' Puffer suggested.

'Well, the government gets about three shillings and sixpence on every ton of the raw asphalt taken out of the lake; and it gets as much as six shillings a ton on it when it's been refined. That means the government gets about £50,000 a year out of this little business here, to say nothing of the duty it collects on the timber used to make barrels to put the pitch in! Yes, Trinidad isn't sorry she's got a pitch lake! They call it "black gold" out here.'

The lake looked even lonelier when the men had gone

away. David bent down to choose one of the stray bits of asphalt which lay about all over its surface. He put a piece in his pocket as a souvenir.

'It won't melt, will it?' he asked Mr Patel, rather nervously.

'I'll give you another souvenir!' Mr Patel chuckled. 'Something else that Sir Walter Raleigh also saw when he was here.'

He called to one of the 'boys' who was still within ear-shot, and gave him instructions in a low tone. The man ran off, and returned very shortly with a jamjar in his hands. It was half-full of water, and there were some little fish wriggling in it.

'They are pitch fish', Mr Patel said, as Laurel and Jane and David peered in at them. 'They live in the rain pools in the lake although the water's almost steaming hot! When the dew falls at night they wriggle from one little pool to another.'

'What a dry life for a fish!' Jane cried.

'Oh, they are very happy', Mr Patel said. 'And we like them, for they eat the mosquito larvae. But you watch them, David, and keep them—if you can!'

Then he said something to Puffer, quietly, and Puffer laughed and came to have a close look at the little fish.

'Yes, I can see them', he said, and both he and Mr Patel looked very mysterious.

It was not until the next morning that Jane and David understood what all the mystery was about. Puffer had been examining some small suckers on the little pitch fish. It was impossible to keep them in jars, as David was to find, when he saw his jamjar empty and his fish strewn all over the floor. In the night they would use their suckers with which to climb up the slippery glass sides and escape.

* * *

After La Brea the Fulfords motored with Laurel and Mr Patel along the beautiful San Francique road, with mile after mile of jungle bordering its sides. They were headed for the

largest sugar estate in the British Empire. At last they were to see 'King Sugar' at home.

On the way they went through the village of Siparia.

'I think you should go in and see the Black Virgin', Mr Patel said, though he stayed in the car.

So they went into the Roman Catholic Church, to see the doll-like figure dressed in a blue dress of quilted satin. Only her little black face showed. People came from all over Trinidad to see her and pray to her. She was supposed to grant all favours asked of her. It was cool in the church, and it smelled of incense. It was hard to go out into the glare and heat again.

'Some people think she may once have been the figure-head of a ship', Mr Patel said as they drove off.

At last they reached the St Madeleine Sugar Estate. Mr Patel kept on referring to it as 'the Usine', until Puffer begged him to explain why.

'Why suddenly burst into French?' he asked.

'I'm sorry', Mr Patel said. 'You see we use the central factory system here, the one they use in the French islands. It used to be only the factory which was called the Usine, but now we call the whole area planted by the companies the Usine.'

And he explained that there were eight estates to the Usine St Madeleine, employing about eleven thousand people in all, mostly Negroes and East Indians.

'Only about five thousand of them actually work on the estate—and they also cultivate their own fields. The others sell their cane to the Usine.'

They toured the estates by car, stopping to speak to an overseer now and then. There were only about a hundred white men working at the Usine.

'You work hard too!' Mr Patel said to one of them. 'Don't you, Mr Robinson?'

'During croptime I work a minimum of twelve hours a

day', Mr. Robinson answered. He was a young man in riding breeches, mounted on a mule. 'I never leave the estate! I'm a slave to "King Sugar". But I don't really mind, we're very comfortable here, with a nice club house and tennis courts and a football ground. We've even got a nine-hole golf-course.'

He pointed out his house to them. It was a pretty white bungalow, with a palmtree waving its fronds over it, and the rolling sea of cane all around it.

'The labourers live in barracks', he said. 'They're pretty comfortable too.'

Mr Robinson offered to show them what he called a 'cross-section' of how the cane progressed through all its stages until it became sugar. There were twenty-five thousand acres under cultivation in the Usine, so he could show them cane in every stage. He got into the car, and under his guidance they drove on.

First they saw fields of fresh green shoots, pale and pretty, the young cane looking entrancing with great scarlet and yellow birds flying over it. In others the shoots had grown considerably. In others it had reached maturity and was waiting only to be cut. In others again men were actually cutting it, and others were loading it onto carts drawn by mules and little donkeys, by bullocks, and even, once or twice, by water buffaloes.

Last of all they saw the fields where cutting was over and the cane already taken away. Only the sad-looking trash remained, and women in bandanas were raking it up.

'Is that so as to burn it?' Puffer asked. 'They have fine trash-burnings in Fiji, like gigantic bonfires!'

'We don't burn the trash', Mr Robinson said. 'We use everything, even that. It makes manure.'

'I never dreamt that the whole cycle was kept going all the time in different stages', David said. 'I thought the cane all grew and was cut, and then you started again.'

'No fear', Mr Robinson said. 'Our crop-cutting lasts six months, you see, so our fields are always in varying stages. Otherwise we couldn't manage. Some of it would rot before we could cut it.'

'I bet you use Barbados seedlings!' Jane said. 'They told us in Barbados all the best cane came from there.'

'I suppose you can depend on a good crop if you do use the best quality cane?' Puffer asked. 'Or have you many headaches with cane?'

Mr Robinson laughed ruefully.

'I wish you were right. It's always the same old headache with sugar—too much rain in the cutting season spoils it (and Trinidad people won't work in the rain, anyway!) and too little dries it up!'

He explained that if the cane was dry it wouldn't be sweet—there wouldn't be any sucrose in it, and the more sucrose there was the better the cane was, naturally.

Mr Robinson pulled up a tall, juicy-looking stalk from the earth, and stripped the fronds from it, leaving bare the beautiful stick with its green and purple enamelled colouring. He gave it to David.

'Like to try?' he asked.

David didn't know where to begin, so Mr Robinson got out his penknife and stripped off the outer skin for a foot, split the white pulp exposed into four and hacked off a section at the first joint. He handed rounded pieces of cane to everyone.

'Good, eh?' he asked.

The juice dripped down Jane's chin. '*Lovely!*' she cried.

'I'll show you a better way to eat cane', Mr Robinson said, and called out, 'Hi! Joe! show us how to peel sugar cane!'

Joe was only a little fellow, but he had a row of rock-like teeth. He grinned, seized the stick, and stripped the remaining skin with his teeth, with the greatest of ease.

'You'd never have to go to the dentist if you did that regularly', the overseer said. 'No wonder these boys have good teeth!'

Jane at once had a try at emulating Joe with another stalk, but she found it a painful affair.

'When I think what trouble we've had making you eat your crusts!' Puffer said. 'We'll have to order you a supply of cane!'

Puffer was avid for information about sugar. Jane and David and Laurel listened with half an ear while he learned all about it: how it took eighteen months for cane to be ready after a new planting; how after that it bore an annual crop for between five and fifteen years without replanting; how the Usine produced 400,000 tons of cane a year, and 40,000 tons of raw sugar; how 700 tons were used locally and refined, but the rest went to Great Britain and Canada to be refined there.

* * *

Then they all saw how the cut cane was carted off to central points and then loaded onto a light railway. The Usine had more lines of standard gauge railway than the government had.

From there the cane went to the factory, and so they followed it there, and watched the seemingly endless line of cane-stacks being shot into the mechanical jaws, the cane broken and ground, the juice hurled in one direction, the megass, or skins and pulp, thrown in another to be used as fuel eventually. Then they saw the succeeding stages—the juice thickened and crystallized, the pale dry sugar, the full sugar sacks open, and the bags sewn up by a mechanical stitcher, ready to go abroad.

'You know', Mr Robinson said, 'during crop-time this factory never stops! It runs day and night, in twelve-hour shifts. We work hard to get sugar on your breakfast-table, Jane!'

'I'll hardly like to take it after seeing all this!' Jane said.

'Oh, you take it! Eat as much as you can', Mr Robinson said. 'That's what we're working for—to sell sugar!'



On their way back to Port of Spain they stopped at a little village, and called on two little cousins of Laurel's. The Indian village was gay with prayer flags fluttering in the wind, and there were flowers everywhere, and purple butterflies hovering over the flowers, so that one did not notice at first how poor the homes were, or how ugly were the gullies beside them, with the scavenger birds waiting nearby for their prey.

Lily and Gordon were 12 and 10. Lily wore a calico frock and Gordon wore shorts and a khaki shirt. Neither wore shoes.

They pointed out their school to Puffer from the window of their little house. It was a long, low building with a corrugated iron roof, and it had been founded by the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, and was run by them, with help from the Government.

'There are such large classes', Gordon said, 'we have to be taught under the trees sometimes! It's hot, too, out there!'

Lily and Gordon learned the three Rs, and history and geography, but they did a lot of practical work too. Gordon was very keen on carpentry, and Lily did needlework; and they both helped in the school vegetable garden. They were both members of the Young Farmers' Club.

Their mother was a shy woman in a sari with a coin necklace and many bracelets. She answered Puffer's questions in a whisper.

No, she said, the children weren't Christians. Although they went to a Church school, they didn't have to be—the schools were open to all.

Lily and Gordon would leave school when they were 14, Mr Patel said, and go into the cane fields to work, like their father. But if only their father and mother could manage to keep them at school for a few more years—('But they need the money!' Mr Patel said)—then they could go on to the

secondary school and work for the Certificate of Education, and perhaps even go on to take the Higher Certificate.

'I want to be a teacher!' Lily said. 'I'd like to go to the Teachers' Training College they've opened in Trinidad! But I can't unless I get my Certificate of Education first.'

Trinidad badly needed teachers, Mr Patel said, and Lily would be a welcome addition.

'And Gordon wants to be a great man!' his uncle said. 'He wants to go to the University and become a doctor. He's clever enough but—' and he shrugged his shoulders.

'Is it impossible?' David asked Gordon, who looked very small, but very intelligent indeed, with his bright, darting eyes, and his quick little gestures.

'I can win a scholarship!' Gordon declared.

'He *might* get to Codrington College in Barbados', Mr Patel said, 'and get a Durham University degree. Or if he's very clever and very lucky he might get to the University College of the West Indies. Did you see it in Jamaica? It's at the foot of the Blue Mountains—Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, opened it—she's the Chancellor.'

There were faculties of medicine, science, and arts, and they awarded the degrees of London University.

'But even going to Jamaica might cost too much for Gordon's family', Mr Patel said. 'And there's one last hope, then. Gordon could work for his degree right here in Trinidad, for there's a Department of Extra-Mural Studies attached to the University College of the West Indies, and there's a resident tutor here. So if only—'

Mr Patel didn't finish his sentence. But they all knew what he had in mind. If only Gordon and Lily worked hard, if only their parents could do without the money for a little while, if only everything went well, then they could both lead the lives they wanted to lead later on when they were grown up.

'If only—!' Jane and David said too. 'Good luck to you both!'

CHAPTER X

'LITTLE AMSTERDAM', NELSON'S DOCKYARD— AND HOME

THE FULFORDS were always to remember the last part of their tour as 'doing the bits and pieces'. Time was running short, and though they would have liked to spend months on each of the last few places they were to visit they had to be content with days or even hours.

Next, the Fulfords found themselves in a house which might have been in Holland, being entertained by friends as Dutch as if they lived in Rotterdam. The Van Lyndens were plump and square, and Jöst, their two-year-old son, was a perfect little Dutchman, with a long square head, turned up nose, quizzical eyebrows, and a grave burgher's mouth. His hair was black and straight and cut in a 'pudding basin'. His torso was long, and his sturdy legs were short.

The Fulfords were still in the West Indies, but they were in the Dutch West Indies—which is a little Holland. They were in Willemstad Curaçao, one of the busiest ports in the world.

Mynheer Van Lynden and his Mevrow were generous hosts, but were simple and unselfconscious in their ways. They dressed well, but for comfort, not show, and their pleasures consisted in eating good food, entertaining their friends, and providing treats for their children.

Mevrow wore a diamond ring which, like those of many of the other Mevrows, was a fabulous heirloom, but from her casual attitude to it no one would have suspected its worth; and Puffer only discovered by chance that the flowers decorating the dinner table on the night he first dined with his new friends had been flown from Venezuela specially for the occasion.

The Van Lyndens spoke of Queen Juliana of the Nether-

lands with love and admiration, and time and again the Fulfords heard of her visit to Curaçao during the war, for Curaçao was at that time the only one of her possessions not in enemy hands.

They heard, too, sad tales of misfortunes which had come upon relations and friends in Holland during the occupation—for everyone in Curaçao seemed closely linked with Holland—and inspiring tales of bravery too.

'Oh, the tulips!' their friends recalled, 'the lovely tulips of Holland. We were there last Easter, we bought a garland of them to hang on the bonnet of our car! We can't wait for our next visit!'

Everyone talked of travel to Europe as if it were a tram ride away. Everyone discussed the oil refinery—the very pulse of life, it seemed, there, though no one referred to the smell of oil which pervaded the island. Everyone seemed clean and well-off and law-abiding. And everyone talked English, French, and German as easily as Dutch.

'Everyone' that is, among the friends to whom they had introductions.

When they moved among the people lower down in the social scale, they found things rather different, and the first and most obvious difference was the language. Dutch was the official language of the territory, but the vast majority of the people spoke Papiamentu.

This extraordinary language was a fantastic mixture of Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, English, and some American-Indian words. It was spoken only in Curaçao in all the world.

'Jöst knows the Lord's Prayer in Papiamentu!' Mevrouw Van Lynden said, when Puffer asked her help. 'Listen!'

'Nos 'Tata cu ta na cielo, Bo Nomber sea santificá. Larga Bo reino bini na nos, Bo boluntad sea hací na tera como na cielo', Jöst lisped.

One morning they visited the famous floating market of Curaçao. They admired the rows of schooners anchored the

length of a street, sails furled, bowsprits pointing forwards over the pavements. There the housewives and their black servants came to buy produce from South America.

'We get fruit and vegetables', their hostess said, 'and grain, and fish, and meat, too—lots of bananas!—and chickens and goats and even cattle. Curaçao has to import all its food. We all live too much out of cans from America here!'

Another day they visited the huge oil refinery and were shown over by the manager. The oil refinery had been the largest in the world until the Abadan refinery in Persia had been set up. The British and Dutch sent their oil to Curaçao, he explained, while the Americans sent theirs to Aruba. The crude oil came across the lake in a stream of specially designed light-draught ships. About ten thousand people worked in the refinery, among them 2,500 Portuguese.

Then, alas, it was time to go, and as their plane took off, Puffer said:

'Gracious, I seem to have drunk everything in Curaçao—except curaçao!'

He had a liking for the golden liqueur richly flavoured with orange peel, so he spoke with real regret.

'Hardly any is made on the island now', he said, 'I suppose we've that vast oil industry to thank for that! The days when this little liqueur industry run by a few people was the most important thing to do with this island are long gone. Now it's all oil! oil! oil! And I know which smell I prefer!'

* * *

From the prosperous and perhaps rather materialistic present of Curaçao they were promptly switched to the past; for they visited Antigua, in the Leeward Islands, next—one of that chain of scattered islets forming the north-eastern shoulder of the Antilles.

'Now for the smallest West Indian Colony with the fewest inhabitants,' Puffer said. 'Once the Leewards were rich and

important, so important that the English fleet made its headquarters here. But they're forgotten now.'

Perhaps not quite forgotten. Antigua had been the site of a great American army base during the war, and was also a stopping-place for the two main Pan-American Airway flights to South America, and the Caribbean flight, and the British West Indian Airways. Now the British West Indian Airways still connected the island with the outside world.

But the Fulfords had not come to see bases and airports. Puffer, especially, had come to see English Harbour and Nelson's Dockyard.

It lay at the south-eastern corner of Antigua. The harbour was admirable, beautifully sheltered, and almost completely landlocked. It had been formed in the crater of an extinct volcano, and it was possible to approach it only by the narrowest of entrances.

David's proudest moment so far had been during his stay in Jamaica, when he had stood at Port Royal, the old buccaneers' capital, and read the inscription, the noblest and simplest perhaps in the world, to the greatest sea hero of them all.

In this Place

Dwelt

HORATIO NELSON

You who Tread in his Footsteps

Remember His Glory

Now he walked in Nelson's house, darkened by slatted shutters two hundred years old, and gazed on the worm-eaten four-poster bed and at a chair and a rotting table.

'Dem ain't de real furniture ah'm afraid, sah!' the Negro guide said, noticing his interest. 'When de Admiralty give up de house dem sell all de furniture what belong to Lawd Nelson!'

David recovered his spirits, however, as he was shown

more authentic memorials to the young captain of H.M.S. *Boreas*, who had spent years on the West Indies station before fame had gilded his name, and who had married a local girl, a young widow with a son, in the neighbouring island of St Nevis.

'He hated Antigua', Puffer said. 'He wrote "Was it not for Mrs Montray, who is *very, very* good to me, I should almost hang myself at this infernal hole".'

Soon even David had seen enough of the office, the bedrooms, the cold storage room (with a hook on which to hang meat) the old capstans, the ancient boathouse, and the enormous old sail loft-stores. It was all desolate, dank, and depressing, even to him, the boards powdery, everything in slovenly disrepair. But they were all a little cheered by the inscription scrawled on a wall, it was said, by George V when he was a young midshipman—

'A Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year 2 You All'

And then, too soon, too suddenly, their tour was over, and they were on their way back to Jamaica.

'We've only pecked at the West Indies', Puffer said, 'there's so much more I'd like to see and do and find out. But it would take years, not weeks or days!'

'What astounds me', David said, 'is how different they all are from each other! I don't only mean that Cuba's an independent republic, while Martinique's a Department of France, and that Trinidad can be called "Little India", while Barbados is a bit of old England, and Curaçao is Dutch, and . . .'

'I know', Puffer said as he paused, 'they're entirely different from each other. They might be different nations, in some ways, not just different little places! But they've a lot in common, all the same.'

'Beauty, I suppose', Jane said. 'Natural beauty, I mean. Some of the places are pretty squalid as far as buildings and houses generally go!'

'Natural beauty and disasters', Puffer said. 'Hurricanes and earthquakes and fires seem to come up pretty regularly and devastate things out here in these parts. No one can get away from their effects. Everyone suffers. They have a prosperous past and a doubtful future in common, too—the fear of increasing overpopulation for most of them, with all the attendant evils. That's why the most frequent subject of conversation in the British West Indies today is Federation.'

'What would that do for them?' David asked.

'Make all the different customs regulations the same, so travel and trade would be easier. Get rid of the different monetary systems in different islands, and do the same thing about the law—that differs too from place to place. Everyone would co-operate more easily if the islands were considered as one unit. Trinidad, Jamaica, Antigua, and other islands have accepted the general idea but they're still fighting about the details! The larger colonies don't want to find they're supporting the smaller ones—that's one of the main troubles.'

'I'd like to see Federation over the whole Caribbean, not just the British West Indian Colonies', Jane said.

'Now you're asking for something!' Puffer said. 'If you say things like that you'll be accused of being an idealist, not a realist—and the word will be used as an insult, too. But don't ever be ashamed of being an idealist, Jane! And the West Indies is a good place to expend some idealism on. It's suffered from the beginning from too much realism and too little idealism.'

'And there', Puffer added suddenly, 'is my last article in the series on the Caribbean. That's the note to finish on!'

INDEX AND PRONUNCIATIONS

a as in bat	ā as in bate	á as in calm	ǎ as in aunt (pronounced very shortly)
e as in bet	ē as in beat	é as in her	
i as in bit	ī as in bite		
o as in cot	ū as in coat	oo as in soot	ōō as in coo
u as in but	ū as in mute	aw as in fawn	

If one syllable is to be stressed more than another it is followed by ' (thus bār-bā'dos).

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